SPECIAL EatingWell EDITION

Healing Foods

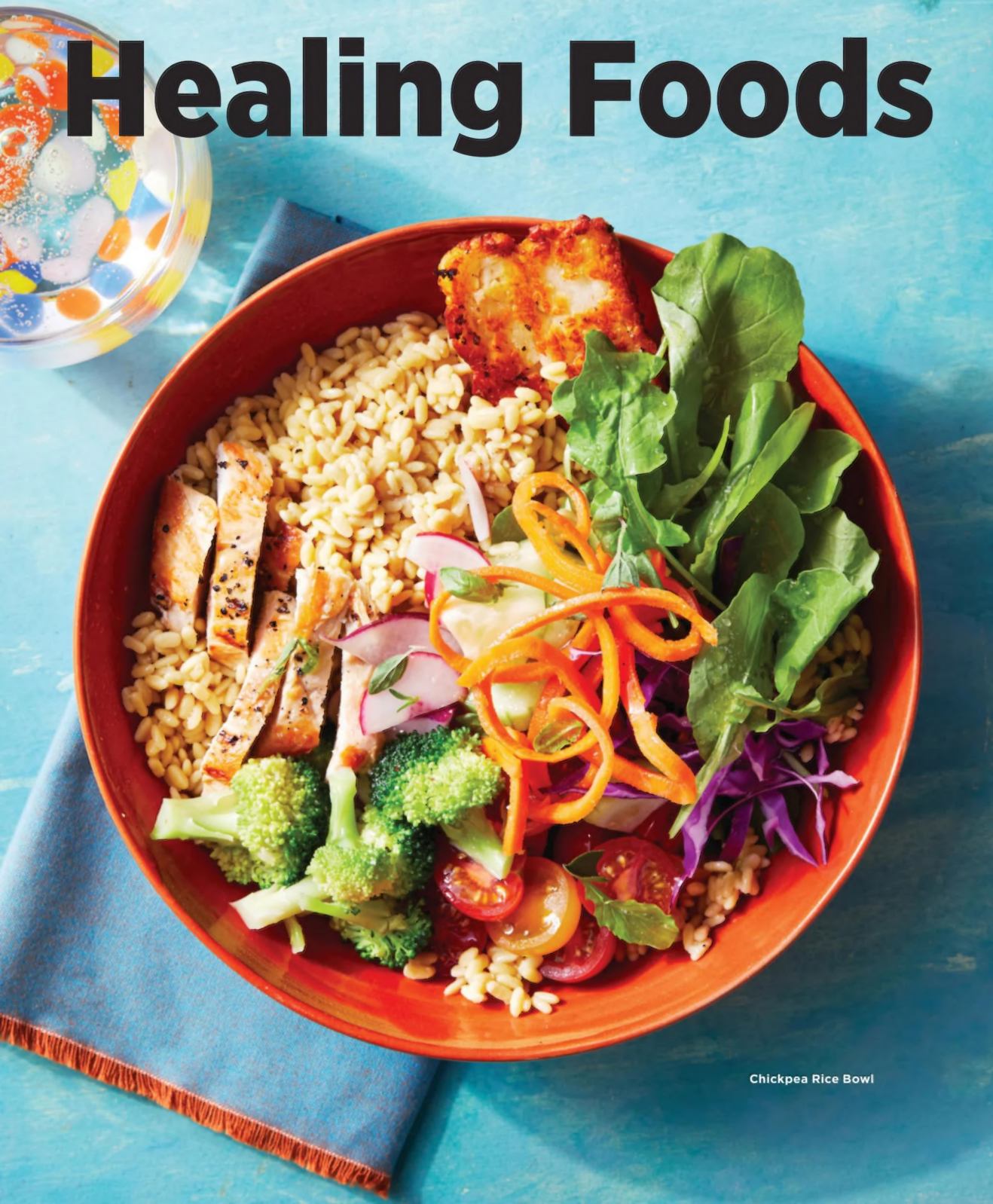
Less Inflammation • Better Gut Health • Stronger Immunity

PLUS: Delicious, Simple Recipes

HEALING THE SOUL
Dolly Parton and her sister Rachel's childhood cornbread!

SPECIAL EatingWell EDITION

Healing Foods



Chickpea Rice Bowl

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Parts of this special edition were previously published.

This book is for general information purposes only, and nothing contained in it is intended to substitute for individualized advice from a physician or other health professional. The reader should consult the appropriate health professional in matters relating to physical and mental health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or treatment.

HOW FOODS CAN HEAL

Today host Dylan Dreyer shares how food can help soothe a sore throat, bolster her family's immune systems and help her feel her best.

BY DANIELLE DEANGELIS
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

When you consider "healing foods," what comes to mind? Is it a warm, cozy bowl of chicken noodle soup? The nostalgic flavor of Mom's cookies fresh out of the oven? Or is it throat-soothing tea for sick days? There are many ways that our favorite foods can be comforting and healing for the body and mind while prioritizing nourishing ingredients.

For Dylan Dreyer, balance is key. "I grew up eating well-balanced meals," says the *Today 3rd Hour* cohost and NBC News meteorologist. "I don't diet. I don't deprive myself or my kids of anything. We enjoy ice cream cones, but I make sure that at some point every day they eat some fruits and vegetables."

IMMUNE SUPPORT

Fall marks the start of cold and flu season, when our immune systems are often working overtime to keep us healthy or help us recover. Dreyer shared her favorite sick-day recipe, which she makes for both herself and her kids.

"Smoothies really help," she says. "My kids, I don't know why, but they don't eat oranges or clementines. When you have a cold, vitamin C goes a long way." And Dreyer's four-ingredient Orange-Mango Smoothie (page 7) is packed with vitamin C, which not only helps support immune health, according to a 2023 review in *Mucosal Immunology,* but also has anti-inflammatory properties that are important for recovering from sickness.

"I'll put in some oranges, frozen bananas and some frozen mango to add some sweetness to it," Dreyer says. "And I use unsweetened vanilla almond milk to mix it all together. It tastes like a creamsicle-flavored smoothie, but it's got two whole oranges in it, so it really has a lot of that vitamin C. My kids don't really even like orange juice, but when I give them this smoothie, they think they're getting something fancy because it tastes like a milkshake."

The low-effort smoothie is perfect for sick days, and Dreyer's right: It tastes just like a creamsicle. Plus it provides 171 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin C. What's not to love?

+

DREYER MIXES ZUCCHINI INTO EVERYTHING FROM HER SAVORY BOLOGNESE SAUCE TO SWEET ZUCCHINI MUFFINS.

Dylan Dreyer is an anchor on *Today 3rd Hour*, a meteorologist for NBC News and host of the documentary series *Earth Odyssey with Dylan Dreyer*.

HEALING COMFORT

As the weather cools, the ingredients Dreyer stocks up on reflect the season. With autumn produce and cozy spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg, the host's cooking staples are nothing short of comforting. "Fall is all about apples and pears and those homey spices," she says. "I really love the feel of fall and cooking in the fall."

These autumn flavors aren't just delicious: They also pack a nutritious punch. Cinnamon, for example, can help lower blood sugar levels, per a 2021 review published in *Food & Function*. And when paired with fiber-packed apples, it's especially heart-healthy.

There are two veggies that Dreyer keeps on hand no matter the season. "I always keep carrots and zucchini in my refrigerator," she says. Carrots are loaded with beta-carotene, which helps produce vitamin A, a vital nutrient for immune health, healthy vision and more. Zucchini has been shown to be beneficial for skin health, bone health and heart health. Due to their subtle flavors, Dreyer mixes them into a variety of foods, including a savory bolognese and sweet zucchini muffins, which she whips up by making slight adjustments to her favorite banana bread recipe. "I replace the oil with half applesauce and half shredded zucchini that I squeeze a lot of the moisture out of. The kids like it because it's a little sweet."

Those vegetables are also part of Dreyer's favorite comfort meal—which happens to be full of healing ingredients. "When I think of home, I think of my chicken pot pie," she says. "It's got carrots, zucchini and onions. I throw in peas, corn and potatoes. It's nice, hearty and filling." She swaps the typical heavy cream for butter and uses gluten-free flour (her son, Calvin, has celiac disease) and chicken broth to make a roux. "It's super hearty and healthy because of all the vegetables—very satisfying," she says. With fiber from the veggies and protein from the chicken, the pot pie is a satisfying choice that will keep the family full. While Dreyer sometimes makes her own crust, she has a time-saving secret: store-bought gluten-free puff pastry.

ROUTINES MEAN LESS STRESS

Maintaining a routine can be an effective way to stick with your health goals, whether it's adjusting to an earlier wake-up time or staying consistent with a new workout schedule. And that routine can complement a healing approach to food. "I am all about routine," Dreyer says. "I think it's the only way I can stay organized and keep myself from getting stressed."

In the morning, Dreyer is out the door with her coffee, which gives her a needed energy boost before she goes live on air. Moderate coffee intake each day can improve your mood, lower your risk of heart disease and even lower your risk of Alzheimer's disease, according to a 2020 study in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*. Dreyer pairs hers with a light breakfast, knowing she will probably eat on set. "I usually eat some Belvita breakfast

Dylan Dreyer's Orange-Mango Smoothie

ACTIVE TIME: 5 min **TOTAL TIME:** 5 min

- 2 small oranges, peeled, seeded and roughly chopped
- ½ cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- ⅓ cup frozen sliced banana (about 1 small)
- ⅓ cup frozen mango chunks

Combine oranges, almond milk, banana and mango in a blender. Puree on high until smooth, about 1 minute.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 2 CUPS

biscuits—the cranberry orange is my favorite flavor," she says. The biscuits are a little high in added sugar, but Dreyer typically limits her added sugar intake for the rest of the day.

For a television personality, Dreyer's mornings are generally low-key. She tells EatingWell that she wouldn't have it any other way—especially since a busy and at times unpredictable work schedule follows it. After work, Dreyer chooses dinners that are also simple to prepare.

"I'll buy meatloaf mix, ground chicken or ground turkey. I'll sauté carrots, onions and zucchini, I'll add the meat to it, and then I just top it off with a jar of tomato sauce," she says. "When I need the kids to eat a full, hearty meal, I feel like it's a perfect easy weeknight recipe."

Dreyer prioritizes fiber and protein in her family's dinners, a good approach, given that 90 to 97 percent of Americans don't get enough fiber in their diet. Protein is also a crucial part of a healthy eating pattern, as it supports muscle growth and repair, promotes digestive health and helps stabilize blood sugar levels.

RAISING KIDS WHO LOVE FOOD

Their ambivalence about oranges aside, Dreyer's sons—ages 7, 4 and 3—are nonselective eaters who love fruits and vegetables on their own. "My kids really like broccoli, and they especially love it roasted," she says, adding that it's her favorite dinner side to make. "I drizzle it with olive oil and season it with mushroom powder, which adds this salty, umami flavor." She says her husband isn't a vegetable lover, but he eats the roasted broccoli "like popcorn." And eating roasted broccoli like a snack is as healthy as it sounds: Packed with prebiotic fiber, broccoli is an anti-inflammatory vegetable that's great for your gut microbiome. Thanks to its polyphenols, broccoli has been shown time and time again to help decrease cancer risk, including in a 2023 study published in *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition*. And it's a rich source of antioxidants and vitamins, so it's a great nutritious side to add balance to any meal.

Speaking of snacks, Dreyer's kitchen is stocked with a variety for adults and kids. You'll find an array of nutrient-dense fruits—raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, pears, apples, kiwi and mango—in her refrigerator. By snacking on fruit throughout the day, Dreyer and her family are supporting their overall health. Fruit is rich in antioxidants and packed with fiber and anti-inflammatory properties. Plus, berries such as raspberries and blueberries are recommended by gastroenterologists to support gut health and healthy digestion.

You'll also find fun salty options in Dreyer's snack drawer. "I don't want to deprive them of anything, so there's pretzels, Tostitos, Cheetos and other little fun, crunchy snacks—they're kids!" she says. All foods can be included in a healthy eating pattern. Just be sure to enjoy less nutrient-dense options in moderation.

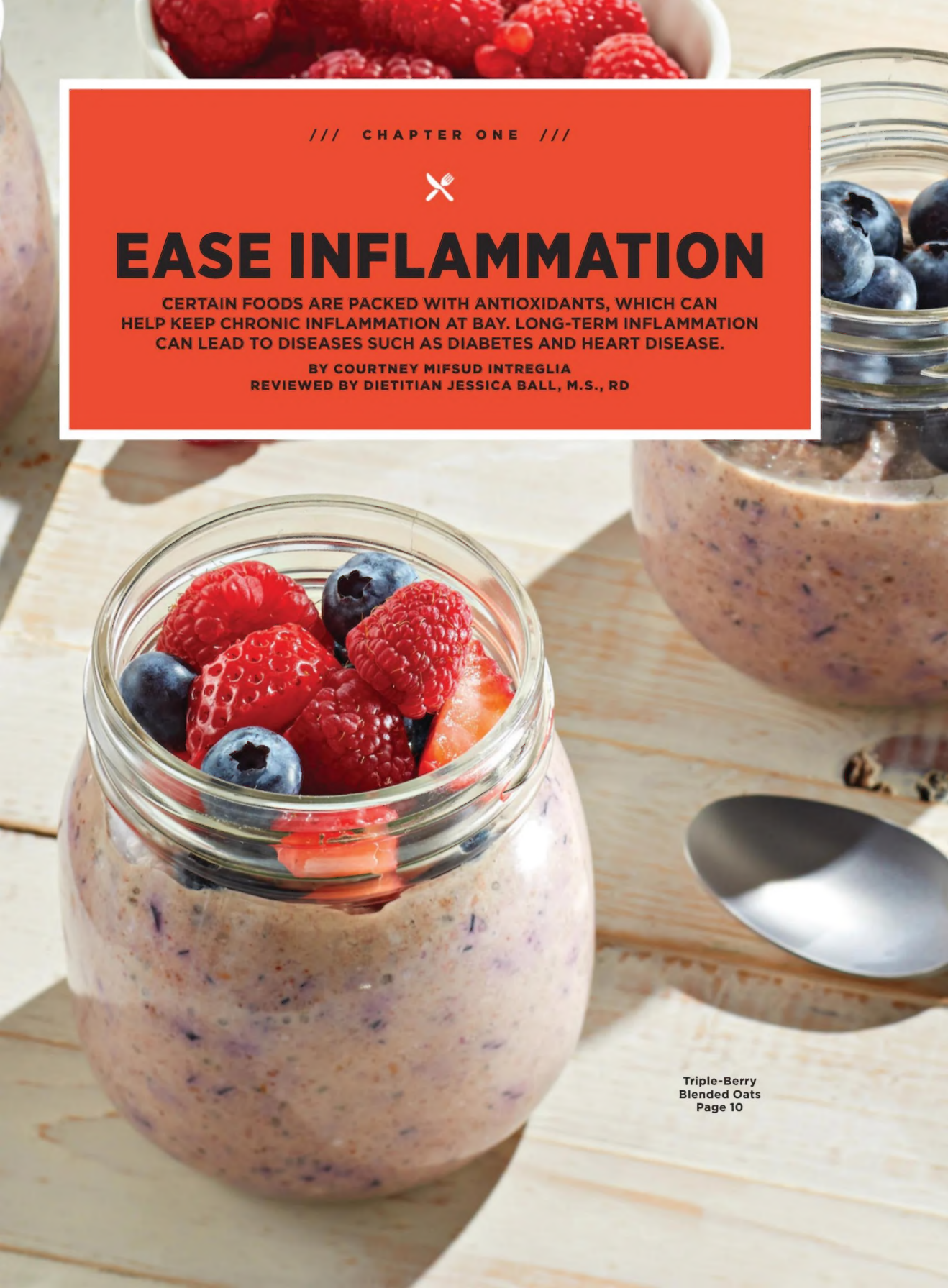
This sentiment fully aligns with Dreyer's philosophy of eating well. "For me, eating well is about eating what you love but making sure you get some good stuff in there, too." ●

/// CHAPTER ONE ///

EASE INFLAMMATION

CERTAIN FOODS ARE PACKED WITH ANTIOXIDANTS, WHICH CAN HELP KEEP CHRONIC INFLAMMATION AT BAY. LONG-TERM INFLAMMATION CAN LEAD TO DISEASES SUCH AS DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD



Triple-Berry Blended Oats
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BERRIES

From ruby-red strawberries to fresh blueberries, these sweet treats are packed with vitamins and antioxidants called flavonoids that fight inflammation. A 2021 review published in *Nutrients* found that blackberries, blueberries, strawberries and raspberries have an abundance of compounds that can benefit the treatment of obesity-induced inflammation and associated health conditions, such as those related to neuroinflammation and mental health.

Blueberries are particularly potent and contain up to 9 millimoles of antioxidants in a 3.5-ounce serving, according to a 2010 Antioxidant Food Database published in the *Nutrition Journal.* Blueberries' outer skin contains anti-inflammatory compounds called anthocyanins, which are responsible for their deep blue hue. A 2020 review published in *Advances in Nutrition* found that people who regularly consume blueberries have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, along with improved weight management and brain functioning.

Berries are delicious and nutrient dense, whether fresh, frozen or cooked. Frozen berries can be blended into a hearty smoothie with yogurt and bananas. A handful of fresh blueberries or sliced strawberries adds a pop of sweetness to a salad.

Triple-Berry Blended Oats

ACTIVE TIME: 5 min
TOTAL TIME: 8 hr 5 min
Oats blend seamlessly with berries and offer a good dose of fiber in this easy breakfast. Old-fashioned rolled oats are best for blending because of how they soften and soak up the liquid, resulting in a creamy, luxurious texture. If you're using frozen berries, give them a head start by breaking them up in the blender first before adding the rest of the ingredients.

- 2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1¾ cups oat milk
- 1¼ cups fresh or frozen blueberries, divided
- 1¼ cups fresh or frozen raspberries, divided
- ¾ cup chopped fresh or frozen strawberries, divided
- ¼ cup smooth natural almond butter
- 2 tablespoons chia seeds
- 2 teaspoons pure maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅛ teaspoon salt

1. Place oats, oat milk, 1 cup blueberries, 1 cup raspberries, ½ cup strawberries, almond butter, chia seeds, maple syrup, vanilla and salt in a blender. Process until oats and berries are smooth, about 1 minute. (If using frozen berries, process in the blender until finely chopped, then add the remaining ingredients.)
2. Divide the mixture among 4 (8 ounce) jars; cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours. Top with the remaining berries before serving.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 (8 OZ.) JAR
CALORIES 390 **CARBOHYDRATES** 55G
DIETARY FIBER 12G **TOTAL SUGARS** 15G
ADDED SUGARS 5G **PROTEIN** 11G **TOTAL FAT** 16G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **SODIUM** 119MG

Raspberry-Pineapple Fish Tacos

ACTIVE TIME: 45 min
TOTAL TIME: 45 min
This refreshing twist on traditional fish tacos features a lively raspberry-pineapple salsa and a yogurt-lime cream sauce.

- 3 limes
- 2 tablespoons canola oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 1 pound tilapia, flounder or cod fillets, thawed if frozen
- 1 cup fresh raspberries
- 1 cup cubed fresh pineapple (½ inch)
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced green onion
- ½–1 jalapeño pepper, halved, seeded (if desired) and finely chopped
- ½ cup nonfat plain strained yogurt
- 8 (6 inch) corn tortillas, warmed
- 1 cup finely shredded green cabbage
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves
- Lime wedges

1. Grate 1 teaspoon zest and squeeze 5 tablespoon juice from limes. In a small bowl, combine 2 tablespoons juice, 1 tablespoon oil, chili powder, ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper.
2. Place fish in a sealable plastic bag set in a shallow dish. Pour in the lime mixture, seal and turn to coat. Marinate in the refrigerator for 15 to 30 minutes.
3. In medium bowl, combine raspberries, pineapple, onion, jalapeno, the lime zest, 1 tablespoon lime juice and the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper. In a small bowl, combine yogurt and the remaining 2 tablespoons lime juice.
4. Coat a 12-inch nonstick skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium-high heat. Add the fish (discard marinade) and cook, turning once, until fish flakes easily, 4 to 6 minutes.
5. Break the fish into bite-size pieces with a fork. Serve in tortillas topped with cabbage, salsa, the yogurt mixture and cilantro, with lime wedges on the side.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 2 TACOS
CALORIES 337 **CARBOHYDRATES** 34G
DIETARY FIBER 7G **TOTAL SUGARS** 9G
PROTEIN 29G **TOTAL FAT** 11G
SATURATED FAT 1G **CHOLESTEROL** 57MG
SODIUM 413MG

Strawberry-Balsamic Spinach Salad with Chicken

ACTIVE TIME: 25 min
TOTAL TIME: 25 min
A quick blender vinaigrette does double duty as dressing for this strawberry spinach salad and—with the addition of ketchup and strawberry preserves—as a barbecue sauce for the tenders.

- **2 cups quartered strawberries, divided**
- **2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**
- **¼ teaspoon salt plus ⅛ teaspoon, divided**
- **½ teaspoon ground pepper, divided**
- **3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 tablespoon ketchup**
- **1 tablespoon strawberry preserves**
- **1 pound chicken tenders**
- **1 (5 ounce) package baby spinach**
- **½ cup sliced almonds, toasted**
- **½ cup crumbled feta cheese**
- **½ cup torn fresh basil leaves**

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.
2. Combine 1 cup strawberries, vinegar and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper in a blender. Blend until smooth. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in oil. Transfer ½ cup of the vinaigrette to a large bowl. Add ketchup and preserves to the blender and pulse until smooth.
3. Sprinkle chicken with the remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Oil the grill rack. Grill the chicken until it releases easily, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and baste with the barbecue sauce from the blender. Cook, flipping and basting every 15 seconds, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 165°F, 3 to 4 minutes more. Transfer to a plate and let rest for 5 minutes.
4. Add spinach, almonds, feta, basil and the remaining 1 cup strawberries to the vinaigrette; toss to combine. Serve the salad topped with the chicken.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 3 OZ. CHICKEN & 2 CUPS SALAD **CALORIES** 389 **TOTAL CARBOHYDRATES** 16G **DIETARY FIBER** 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G **ADDED SUGARS** 3G **PROTEIN** 30G **TOTAL FAT** 23G **SATURATED FAT** 6G **SODIUM** 513MG

MUSHROOMS

Fungi contain ergothioneine, an antioxidant that may increase levels of an anti-inflammatory hormone called adiponectin. A 2021 review published in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* linked ergothioneine consumption and blood ergothioneine levels to reduced oxidative stress, lower inflammation and lower risk of cardiometabolic disease and mortality. Mushrooms can be beneficial to people with type 2 diabetes, who often don't produce enough ergothioneine.

Cooked and raw mushrooms contain the powerful antioxidant selenium—which isn't found in most fruits or vegetables. According to the National Institutes of Health, selenium may help prevent cancer, cardiovascular disease, thyroid disease and cognitive decline.

Certain mushrooms are adaptogenic, which means that they increase the body's resistance to physical and chemical stress on the body. A 2020 study in *Healthcare* suggests that reishi mushrooms, an adaptogenic variety, may help alleviate anxiety and depression, bolstering clinical treatments such as therapy and proper medication.

There's a wide, wonderful variety of mushrooms, including button, cremini, oyster, portobello and shiitake. The portobello mushroom is delicious as an accompaniment to a meal or a main dish. Sliced shiitake mushrooms add rich umami flavor to a veggie-packed stir-fry.

Cheesy Spinach & Mushroom Casserole

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 1 hr 15 min

Both homey and healthful, this cheesy dream of a casserole is loaded with nutrients from the spinach and super savory and lip-smacky from all the sautéed mushrooms. Any shroom will do, so pick your fave.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 (8 ounce) package mushrooms, halved and sliced
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (16 ounce) package plus 1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1½ cups shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese, divided
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons milk
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat an 8-inch-square baking dish with cooking spray. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, until softened and starting to brown, about 4 minutes. Add mushrooms and garlic; cook, stirring, until the mushrooms have softened, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl.

2. Add spinach, 1 cup cheese, eggs, milk, salt and pepper to the mushroom mixture. Stir until well combined. Transfer to the prepared baking dish, cover with foil and bake for 40 minutes. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with the remaining ½ cup cheese. Bake, uncovered, until the cheese is melted, about 5 minutes more.

SERVINGS 8 **SERVING SIZE** ½ CUP
CALORIES 177 **CARBOHYDRATES** 7G
DIETARY FIBER 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 11G **TOTAL FAT** 12G
SATURATED FAT 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 68MG
SODIUM 301MG

CABBAGE

The ancient Romans believed that cabbage had medicinal properties and could relieve gout, headaches and some food poisoning. They may have been on to something about this versatile veg. With its layers of green or purple leaves, cabbage contains crucial plant compounds such as glucosinolates, which the body transforms into isothiocyanates. Isothiocyanates are known for their protective effects against certain cancers, according to a 2023 review in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*. Cabbage is also packed with antioxidants, including vitamin C, as well as the compounds sulforaphane and anthocyanins, which are known to tamp down inflammation. Red cabbage has even more antioxidants, thanks to its purple hue. Higher intake of these plant compounds has been linked to lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

Coat cabbage in a yogurt dressing for a tangy slaw. It makes a great base for a Caesar salad riff or a creamy casserole. Try slicing thick slices and searing them with olive oil. This turns the simple vegetable into a satisfying steak-like entree.

Roasted Cabbage Salad with Lemon-Garlic Vinaigrette

ACTIVE TIME: 10 min
TOTAL TIME: 50 min

This dish is dressed with a bright and flavorful lemon-garlic vinaigrette. It goes with everything, from chicken and steak to tofu and grain bowls. If you already have your grill on, you can grill the cabbage wedges instead, which will impart a delightful smoky flavor. You can use red or green cabbage—even Savoy or napa works!

- Olive oil cooking spray
- 1 medium head cabbage
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- Ground pepper to taste
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 small clove garlic, grated
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives or parsley

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil, parchment paper or a silicone baking mat; coat lightly with olive oil cooking spray.

2. Remove any damaged outer leaves from the cabbage and cut into 8 wedges, keeping the core intact to hold them together. Arrange the wedges on the prepared pan. Coat the tops of the wedges lightly with cooking spray and season with ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste.

3. Roast the cabbage, rotating the pan from back to front and flipping the wedges halfway, until tender and golden, 30 to 40 minutes.

4. Meanwhile, combine oil, vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, garlic, the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Cover and shake until well blended.

5. Let the cabbage cool for 5 minutes, then coarsely chop. Transfer to a shallow serving dish and drizzle with the dressing. Sprinkle with almonds and chives (or parsley) before serving.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP
CALORIES 132 **CARBOHYDRATES** 5G
DIETARY FIBER 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 1G **TOTAL FAT** 13G
SATURATED FAT 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 0MG
SODIUM 240MG

TUNA

Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, sardines and tuna, have been shown to decrease inflammation levels, according to a 2021 study published in *Molecules*. Specifically high in the compounds eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), these essential fats play a crucial role in reducing inflammation by serving as precursors to anti-inflammatory components.

A 2021 study published in *Molecular Psychiatry* found that, through their anti-inflammatory components, omega-3 fatty acids may also protect against depression. The study had limitations, including a smaller sample size, and nutritional benefits should serve as a supplement to clinical treatment for depression and other conditions.

Aim to include at least two 3-ounce servings of fish high in omega-3 fatty acids in your diet each week. Canned tuna is a budget-friendly and widely accessible way to pepper fish into your weeknight rotation. While canned tuna packed in either oil or water and can be a sneaky source of sodium, choosing a no-salt-added product will help keep your sodium levels in check. For a delicious lunch, try mixing canned tuna with plain strained yogurt and eating it over half an avocado.

Arugula & Cucumber Salad with Tuna

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 15 min

Spicy baby arugula pairs with crisp Persian cucumbers and celery in this refreshing salad. Castelvetrano olives offer a mild, buttery flavor that doesn't compete with the flavor of the tuna. If you want more punch from your olives, Niçoise or Kalamata olives work well too.

- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon white-wine vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¾ cup thinly sliced celery
- ¾ cup thinly sliced Persian or English cucumber
- 1 (5 ounce) package baby arugula
- 8 pitted Castelvetrano olives, quartered (about ⅓ cup)
- 2 (6.7 ounce) packages no-salt-added tuna fillets in water, drained

1. Whisk basil, vinegar, lemon juice and salt together in a large bowl. Add oil; whisk to combine. Add celery, cucumber, arugula and olives; toss to coat.
2. Divide among 4 bowls. Flake tuna on top of each bowl.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 232 **CARBOHYDRATES** 2G
DIETARY FIBER 1G **TOTAL SUGARS** 1G
PROTEIN 26G **TOTAL FAT** 13G
SATURATED FAT 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 29MG
SODIUM 519MG

SPINACH

Popeye was right: Spinach is a nutrition powerhouse. Tons of research, including a 2021 article in *BMC Gastroenterology,* shows that spinach has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It contains several antioxidants, including vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene and flavonoids.

Dark leafy greens such as spinach and kale are also rich in vitamin K, which plays a crucial role in bone health. Vitamin K helps maintain bone density and strength, reducing the risk of fractures and osteoporosis, according to a 2022 systematic review published in *Biomedicines.* The vitamin C in spinach helps promote collagen production and keeps skin healthy. Plus, the antioxidants in this leafy green might help protect your skin from damage caused by UV rays and environmental pollutants, according to a 2022 study published in *Antioxidants.*

Spinach can be blitzed with fruit for a nutrient-dense smoothie or serve as the base for a hearty salad. Bolster a casserole by folding in handfuls of fresh spinach. Or stir the greens into a pot of brothy beans for a fiber-packed soup that will keep you full past lunchtime.

Creamy Spinach-Artichoke Salmon

ACTIVE TIME: 20 min
TOTAL TIME: 20 min
In this easy weeknight dinner, the vegetables and sauce come together in one skillet in a matter of minutes while the salmon broils. Plus, the salmon is swimming in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and loaded with vitamins and nutrients including B vitamins and potassium.

- 1¼ pounds salmon fillet, cut into 4 equal portions
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup halved and thinly sliced shallot
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 3 cups coarsely chopped baby spinach
- ½ cup sliced marinated artichoke hearts

1. Arrange rack in upper third of oven. Preheat broiler to high. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil.
2. Place salmon skin side down on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Broil, rotating once from front to back, until opaque in the center, 8 to 10 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add shallot and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Whisk together cream, broth, cornstarch, garlic powder and the remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper in a measuring cup. Add to the skillet and cook, stirring, until the mixutre starts to thicken, about 2 minutes. Add spinach and artichoke hearts; cook, stirring, until the spinach has wilted, 1 to 2 minutes more. Remove skin from the salmon, if desired, and serve topped with the sauce.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 4 OZ. SALMON & ABOUT ¼ CUP SAUCE **CALORIES** 373 **CARBOHYDRATES** 7G **DIETARY FIBER** 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G **PROTEIN** 31G **TOTAL FAT** 24G **SATURATED FAT** 9G **CHOLESTEROL** 112MG **SODIUM** 461MG

CAULIFLOWER

A highly versatile nutritional superstar, cauliflower can be riced, roasted or pureed. As a cruciferous vegetable, cauliflower is part of the group that includes Brussels sprouts, broccoli and cabbage. These foods may help tame chronic inflammation and may help reduce the risk of several chronic health outcomes, as documented in a 2019 review published in *Critical Reviews in Food Science Nutrition.*

Cauliflower contains the compounds sulforaphane and glucosinolate, which have been studied for their anti-cancer effects. A 2020 study published in the *Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology* suggests that sulforaphane can help prevent and treat certain types of cancer, such as prostate, breast, colon, skin, urinary, bladder and oral. The same study also found that these compounds have neuroprotective effects and may be a helpful part of a treatment plan for conditions such as traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease.

Cauliflower can be pulsed into a veggie-packed pizza crust or roasted whole for a stunning and hearty main dish. Mashing steamed or boiled cauliflower creates a rich side dish that rivals mashed potatoes.

Curried Cauliflower Salad Sandwiches

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 40 min

The creamy cauliflower mixture in this vegetarian sandwich was inspired by the flavors of Indian raita. A combination of yogurt, cashews and mustard round out the spices in the curry powder, with pomegranate arils adding a juicy pop of sweetness. To keep prep simple, buy cauliflower florets in a bag instead of the whole head, and look for containers of pomegranate arils.

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 12 ounces cauliflower florets, cut into 2-inch pieces
- ½ cup nonfat plain strained yogurt
- ¼ cup finely chopped celery
- ¼ cup unsalted roasted cashews, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon pure maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon stone-ground mustard
- 2 tablespoons fresh pomegranate arils
- 1 (8 ounce) whole-wheat baguette

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Stir oil and curry powder together in a medium bowl. Add cauliflower; toss until well coated. Arrange in an even layer on a large rimmed baking sheet. Roast until browned, about 15 minutes. Let cool completely, about 10 minutes.
2. Whisk yogurt, celery, cashews, mayonnaise, cilantro, parsley, maple syrup and mustard together in a medium bowl until creamy. Gently stir in pomegranate arils.
3. Coarsely chop the roasted cauliflower into bite-size pieces. Add to yogurt mixture, and stir to coat. Using a serrated knife, cut across top of baguette, cutting to, but not through, the other side. Slice the baguette into 4 equal portions. Fill each baguette portion with ½ cup of the cauliflower mixture.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SANDWICH **CALORIES** 438 **CARBOHYDRATES** 53G **DIETARY FIBER** 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G **ADDED SUGARS** 1G **PROTEIN** 13G **TOTAL FAT** 21G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 4MG **SODIUM** 548MG

BEETS

All vegetables offer unique phytochemicals and antioxidants that can help stamp out chronic inflammation, but beets are notable for their benefits. They have a distinct and vibrant color—just try washing it out of your cutting board! The hue is due to betalain, powerful plant pigments that are divided into two categories: betacyanins, which give red beets their red-violet shade, and betaxanthins, which are responsible for the yellow-orange tone of golden beets.

These colors aren't just for show. According to a 2021 review published in *Human Nutrition & Metabolism,* betalains have been shown to lower several markers of inflammation, decrease proinflammatory free-radical production and shield the body from harmful substances called xenobiotics. Plus, beet extracts may be helpful in decreasing inflammation in osteoarthritis. A 1-cup serving of beets provides roughly 7 milligrams of vitamin C, according to the USDA, or 8% of the recommended daily intake. As suggested in a 2020 study published in the *International Journal of Medical Sciences,* vitamin C can help tame chronic inflammation.

A great way reap beets' anti-inflammatory benefits is to stack them with other nutritional powerhouses. A smoothie with blueberries, ginger and beets features three antioxidant-packed ingredients. Or add roasted beets to a hearty grain salad.

Anti-Inflammatory Chicken & Beet Salad

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 15 min

Tart cherry juice concentrate adds flavor and helps fight inflammation when teamed up with other anti-inflammatory foods like beets and walnuts in this quick salad. Buying packaged cooked beets cuts down on time (and mess!). Look for them in the produce section where other prepared vegetables are sold.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons tart cherry juice concentrate
- 1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- ¼ teaspoon grated lime zest
- 1 (5 ounce) package spring mix salad greens
- 2½ cups chopped or shredded cooked chicken breast (10 ounces)
- 1 (6.7 to 8.8 ounce) package cooked beets, quartered
- ¾ cup shaved Brussels sprouts
- ½ cup crumbled goat cheese
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts, toasted

1. Whisk oil, juice concentrate, vinegar, salt, pepper and lime zest together in a large bowl.
2. Add salad greens, chicken, beets and Brussels sprouts; toss to coat. Divide the salad among 4 plates. Top with goat cheese and walnuts.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 2 CUPS
CALORIES 380 **CARBOHYDRATES** 15G
DIETARY FIBER 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G
PROTEIN 24G **TOTAL FAT** 25G
SATURATED FAT 6G **CHOLESTEROL** 59MG
SODIUM 727MG

SQUASH

There are more than a dozen varieties of nutrient-dense squash, with hearty and flavorful applications. All types deliver vitamins A and C, antioxidants, fiber and potassium. Plus, roasting winter squash seeds can provide more fiber, healthy fats, vitamin E and iron. A 2020 study published in *Food Science & Nutrition* found that, due to its high antioxidant activity and the fact that it contains the carotenoid zeaxanthin, butternut squash may help protect the eyes from macular degeneration and support heart health. Zucchini and yellow squash share many of the same nutrition properties. Both offer fiber, folate, potassium and vitamin C, which can help protect skin, eyes, heart and bones.

With the wide variety of squashes, there are many delicious ways to make it. You can slice and season delicata squash before roasting, or stuff it with ground meat or crumbled tofu plus whole grains and greens. Since its flesh pulls apart into strands that resemble angel-hair pasta, spaghetti squash is often halved and baked to create a seemingly noodle-based dish. Grocery stores sell precut and peeled butternut squash, which is a big time-saver. Roast the cubed butternut and blitz it with milk or yogurt for a delicious stew.

Massaged Kale Salad with Roasted Squash & Chickpeas

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 40 min

This salad is piled high with roasted butternut squash, red onion and toasty chickpeas. The kale starts to break down as you massage it, soaking up the lemony dressing. Za'atar, a Middle Eastern seasoning with dried herbs, sesame seeds and sumac, adds a bright, earthy taste. You can swap it out for chili powder for a slightly different flavor profile.

- 5 cups cubed peeled butternut squash (1-inch pieces)
- 1 small red onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more for garnish
- 1 teaspoon za'atar, plus more for garnish
- ⅛ teaspoon salt plus ¼ teaspoon, divided
- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added chickpeas, rinsed
- 6 cups stemmed chopped kale (about ½ large bunch)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ⅛ teaspoon ground pepper plus a pinch, divided, plus more for garnish
- ½ cup whole-milk plain strained yogurt
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 large clove garlic, grated
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Toss squash and onion with 3 tablespoons oil, za'atar and ⅛ teaspoon salt. Spread on the prepared baking sheet. Roast, stirring once halfway, until golden, about 30 minutes. Add chickpeas and roast for 5 minutes more.
3. Meanwhile, place kale in a large bowl. Drizzle with lemon juice, 1 tablespoon oil, ⅛ teaspoon pepper and ⅛ teaspoon salt. Massage with clean hands until the kale is glossy and turns a darker green.
4. Mix yogurt, water and garlic with the remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt and pinch of pepper in a small bowl.
5. Serve the roasted squash and chickpeas over the kale. Sprinkle with feta and drizzle with the yogurt sauce and more oil, if desired. Garnish with more pepper and za'atar, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 2½ CUPS
CALORIES 404 **CARBOHYDRATES** 43G
DIETARY FIBER 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G
PROTEIN 14G **TOTAL FAT** 21G
SATURATED FAT 6G **CHOLESTEROL** 21MG
SODIUM 461MG

EGGS

This breakfast staple can have you fighting inflammation at the very start of your day. Eggs have been referred to as "nature's multivitamin," specifically for the unique antioxidants and nutrients that many people are deficient in. Eggs contain small amounts of numerous vitamins and minerals required for optimal health, including calcium, iron, potassium, zinc, manganese, vitamin E and folate. They also contain 22 percent of the recommended daily amount of selenium. Low levels of selenium have been detected in those with critical illnesses, which is associated with poor clinical outcomes and a higher mortality rate, according to a 2022 study in *Discover Applied Sciences*. It's important to note that whole eggs, yolk included, are what contain the wealth of nutrients. The egg white alone is also a good source of protein.

Eggs are endlessly versatile! A classic whole-egg omelet can provide plenty of anti-inflammatory benefits. Bolster those nutrients by folding in veggies like spinach, tomatoes, onions and peppers. Jammy boiled eggs can be sliced on top of avocado toast, adding even more protein to the delicious favorite.

Sweet Potato, Broccoli & Wild Rice Hash

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 30 min

Cooking this hash in cast iron ensures you'll get crusty bits, but any nonstick skillet will work fine. Serve with your favorite hot sauce.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus 1 teaspoon, divided
- 1 pound sweet potato (1 large), peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces (3½ cups)
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- 2 cups small broccoli florets
- 3 small spring onions or scallions, sliced, whites and greens separated, divided
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 cup cooked wild rice or wild rice blend
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh tarragon
- 4 large eggs

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large cast-iron or nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add sweet potato and season with ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring often, until lightly browned and softened, 8 to 10 minutes. Add broccoli and 1 tablespoon oil; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add spring onion (or scallion) whites and garlic; cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Stir in rice, spring onion (or scallion) greens, parsley and tarragon and remove from heat. Transfer to a plate and cover to keep warm.

2. Heat the remaining 1 teaspoon oil in the pan over medium heat. Crack eggs into the pan and season with the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook to desired doneness, 1½ to 2 minutes for a runny yolk and 3½ to 4 minutes for a firmer yolk. Serve the eggs on top of the hash.

SERVINGS PER RECIPE 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 EGG & 1 CUP HASH **CALORIES** 265 **CARBOHYDRATES** 27G **DIETARY FIBER** 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G **PROTEIN** 11G **TOTAL FAT** 13G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 186MG **SODIUM** 401MG

The Brain Health Link

Promising research suggests that anti-inflammatory foods may help stave off dementia and cognitive decline.

BY CARRIE MYERS, M.S.

REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

COGNITIVE DECLINE, also known as cognitive impairment, is common in older adults. It ranges from mild cognitive impairment to life-altering forms of dementia including Alzheimer's disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

While many factors influence age-related cognitive impairment, the CDC estimates its prevalence at 11.7 percent in adults age 65 and older and 10.8 percent among adults ages 45 to 64.

Signs of cognitive decline include an inability to recall the words you're looking for, a reduced ability to focus, and a lack of enjoyment in activities you used to enjoy.

While certain things, like genetics, age and race, cannot be changed, the CDC cites evidence that supports how changing lifestyle factors that influence brain health may prevent or delay up to 40 percent of dementia cases. Several of these lifestyle factors are affected by nutrition, including blood pressure, weight and blood-sugar levels.

A study released in April 2024 adds to the evidence suggesting that what we eat can affect cognitive impairment. Researchers set out to determine whether two different eating patterns were associated with a reduction in cognitive impairment: an anti-inflammatory diet and a protein-rich diet. They drew their data from a survey conducted in 2018. A total of 8,692 adults age 60 or older, 55 percent of whom were female, were included in the sample.

Parameters were developed that outlined what researchers considered high-protein and anti-inflammatory eating patterns based on how often certain foods were consumed. Protein-rich foods included meats, fish, eggs, dairy and beans (legumes). Anti-inflammatory foods included fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and tea.

Each participant was also interviewed at home using the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), which tests memory and mental acuity. Scores ranged from 0 to 30, with higher scores correlating with higher levels of cognitive function.

After controlling for confounding variables—including age, sex, BMI and smoking status—the researchers found that the chances of cognitive decline decreased as the dietary scores for both an anti-inflammatory diet and a protein-rich diet

increased. An anti-inflammatory diet was associated with a 21 percent reduction in cognitive impairment, and a protein-rich diet was associated with a 9 percent reduction.

Higher markers of inflammation in the body have been linked with greater rates of cognitive decline and depression. And while we might not be able to eliminate cognitive impairment, lifestyle habits can go a long way toward preventing it. The MIND diet, a fusion of the Mediterranean and DASH diets, has been linked with better brain health.

All of these eating patterns include foods that the researchers considered to be anti-inflammatory and protein-rich.

Besides diet, other lifestyle habits also play a role in brain health. These include consistently engaging in physical activity, meditation and deep breathing (which reduces stress and increases the amount of oxygen going to the brain), getting plenty of quality sleep and connecting with friends and family, as loneliness has also been associated with a higher risk of cognitive decline.

/// CHAPTER TWO ///

GUT HEALTH HELPERS

KEEPING YOUR MICROBIOME IN BALANCE IS CRUCIAL TO YOUR OVERALL HEALTH. FOODS THAT ARE HIGH IN FIBER CAN HELP GOOD GUT BACTERIA THRIVE.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

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ARTICHOKES

These pinecone-shaped bulbs are technically a thistle flower bud but are classified as a vegetable by many. Both the tender artichoke hearts and the edible meat at the base of the petals contain plenty of gut-healthy nutrients.

One key to a thriving gut is to fill it with more probiotic bacteria—to do so, you need to feed them with prebiotics so they can flourish and keep making more good bacteria. Artichokes contain inulin, a type of fiber that acts as a prebiotic. Plus, these buds deliver hefty servings of fiber: One medium artichoke provides about 7 grams, almost one-third of your daily recommended fiber intake.

A 2023 study published in the journal *Gut* suggests that dietary fiber can impact both the composition of gut bacteria and the reward signals in the brain and associated food decision-making. People with irritable bowel syndrome may want to be cautious with artichokes, as the high amount of inulin they contain is not easily broken down in the small intestine in people with IBS.

Steam artichokes and eat the woody leaves with a tangy dip, tearing off the end meat with your teeth. Canned or frozen artichoke hearts can be cooked with chicken thighs, chopped into a dip, or folded into a veggie-packed salad.

Spinach & Artichoke Dip Pasta with Chicken

ACTIVE TIME: 20 min
TOTAL TIME: 20 min
If you love warm spinach and artichoke dip, you'll love that we turned this classic into a creamy pasta dish with chicken. And here's what's almost as good as the flavor of this comforting dish: This healthy dinner takes just 20 minutes to prepare.

- 8 ounces whole-wheat rotini pasta
- 4 (4 ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 (5 ounce) package baby spinach, roughly chopped
- 1 tablespoon water
- 4 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese, cut into chunks
- ¾ cup reduced-fat milk
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 (14 ounce) can artichoke hearts, rinsed, squeezed dry and chopped

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain.
2. Sprinkle chicken with ⅛ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the chicken and cook, turning once, until browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 165°F. Transfer to a plate.
3. Combine spinach and water in a large saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until just wilted, about 2 minutes. Add cream cheese and milk to the pan; stir until the cream cheese is melted. Add Parmesan, garlic powder and the remaining ⅛ teaspoon each salt and pepper; cook, whisking, until thickened and bubbling. Add artichokes and the cooked pasta; toss to combine.
4. Divide the pasta mixture among 4 bowls. Thinly slice each chicken breast and arrange on top of the pasta. Sprinkle with additional Parmesan, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 3 OZ. CHICKEN & 1½ CUPS PASTA **CALORIES** 527 **CARBOHYDRATES** 56G **DIETARY FIBER** 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G **PROTEIN** 42G **TOTAL FAT** 14G **SATURATED FAT** 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 109MG **SODIUM** 721MG

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Green Goddess Salad

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 30 min
This gorgeous salad combines fresh shrimp, cucumber, artichoke hearts and cherry tomatoes with homemade dressing.

- ½ avocado, peeled and pitted
- ¾ cup nonfat buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, such as tarragon, sorrel and/or chives
- 2 teaspoons tarragon vinegar or white-wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon anchovy paste or minced anchovy fillet
- 8 cups bite-size pieces green leaf lettuce
- 12 ounces peeled and deveined cooked shrimp (21–25 per pound)
- ½ cucumber, sliced
- 1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes
- 1 cup canned chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 cup rinsed and chopped canned artichoke hearts
- ½ cup chopped celery

1. Puree avocado, buttermilk, herbs, vinegar and anchovy in a blender until smooth.
2. Divide lettuce among 4 plates. Top with shrimp, cucumber, tomatoes, chickpeas, artichoke hearts and celery. Drizzle with dressing.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 2½ CUPS **CALORIES** 262 **CARBOHYDRATES** 31G **DIETARY FIBER** 9G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G **PROTEIN** 22G **TOTAL FAT** 6G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **CHOLESTEROL** 112MG **SODIUM** 1146MG

Cheesy Spinach & Artichoke Stuffed Spaghetti Squash

ACTIVE TIME: 25 min
TOTAL TIME: 25 min

Spaghetti squash is packed with spinach and artichokes for a delicious, creamy casserole. It's well worth roasting the squash versus cooking it in the microwave if you have the time—the flavor gets sweeter and more intense.

- **1 (2½ to 3 pound) spaghetti squash, cut in half lengthwise and seeds removed**
- **3 tablespoons water, divided**
- **1 (5 ounce) package baby spinach**
- **1 (10 ounce) package frozen artichoke hearts, thawed and chopped**
- **4 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese, cubed and softened**
- **½ cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided**
- **¼ teaspoon salt**
- **¼ teaspoon ground pepper**
- **Crushed red pepper and chopped fresh basil for garnish**

1. Place squash cut side down in a microwave-safe dish; add 2 tablespoons water. Microwave, uncovered, on high until tender, 10 to 15 minutes. (Alternatively, place squash halves cut side down on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake at 400°F until tender, 40 to 50 minutes.)
2. Meanwhile, combine spinach and the remaining 1 tablespoon water in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until wilted, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain and transfer to a large bowl.
3. Position rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler.
4. Use a fork to scrape the squash from the shells into the bowl. Place the shells on a baking sheet. Stir artichoke hearts, cream cheese, ¼ cup Parmesan, salt and pepper into the squash mixture. Divide it between the squash shells and top with the remaining ¼ cup Parmesan. Broil until the cheese is golden brown, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle with crushed red pepper and basil, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1¼ CUPS
CALORIES 223 **CARBOHYDRATES** 23G
DIETARY FIBER 9G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G
PROTEIN 10G **TOTAL FAT** 11G
SATURATED FAT 6G **CHOLESTEROL** 28MG
SODIUM 528MG

KIMCHI

Fermented foods are gut-health heroes, and kimchi is one of the most popular and flavor-packed of them. This spicy Korean side dish is made from fermented cabbage and other vegetables. A 2022 review published in the journal *Applied Food Research* found that probiotics play a significant role in gut microbiota composition, which can enhance the immune system.

Kimchi has numerous health benefits, including lowering blood lipid levels, supporting a healthy weight, reducing blood pressure and reducing inflammation. A 2023 scoping review of randomized controlled trials published in the *Journal of Ethnic Foods* found that kimchi could contribute to better blood-sugar control, total cholesterol and blood pressure. The researchers tested fresh versus fermented kimchi and found that those who ate fermented kimchi showed better effects on insulin resistance and insulin sensitivity than did the fresh kimchi group.

Kimchi is widely available in the refrigerated section of the grocery store, near the pickles and sauerkraut. It's great on its own as a side dish, but it's also perfect atop a burger or tacos. Try adding kimchi to the filling of a cheesy quesadilla for an easy, spicy lunch.

Forbidden Rice & White Kimchi Steak Salad

ACTIVE TIME: 45 min
TOTAL TIME: 1 hr

This steak salad doesn't feature a typical dressing, but tangy kimchi, savory pan-fried shallots and lemon juice pack it with flavor. Forbidden rice helps add more color and nutrition to this tangy dinner.

- 8 ounces hanger or boneless rib-eye steak, trimmed
- ¾ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons water
- ½ cup forbidden rice or brown rice
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more to taste
- 1 cup thinly sliced shallots
- 2 cups sliced shiitake mushrooms
- 4 scallions, trimmed and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 large ripe avocado, cubed
- ½ cup white kimchi (baek kimchi) or fresh sauerkraut, drained
- 4 cups tatsoi, spinach or other tender greens
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ cup toasted sunflower seeds

1. Sprinkle steak with ¼ teaspoon salt; set aside for 30 minutes or refrigerate for up to 1 day.
2. Bring water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add rice, reduce heat to low, cover and cook until the water is just absorbed, about 30 minutes for forbidden rice or 40 minutes for brown rice. Stir in 1 tablespoon oil and ¼ teaspoon salt and spread the rice on a baking sheet to cool.
3. Meanwhile, separate shallot slices into rings. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add shallots and cook, stirring often, until browned and crispy, 6 to 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the shallots to a plate; set aside.
4. Add mushrooms and ⅛ teaspoon salt to the pan; cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Add scallions and cook, stirring, until tender, about 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl.
5. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan. Cook the steak, turning once and adjusting the heat as necessary, until browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 135°F, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a clean cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes. Cut into cubes.
6. Transfer the rice to the bowl with the vegetables and add avocado, kimchi (or sauerkraut) and the steak; gently mix to combine. Divide among 4 shallow bowls. Add greens to the large bowl and toss with lemon juice and the remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt. Top the rice mixture with the greens, the reserved shallots and sunflower seeds. Drizzle with more oil, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 2 CUPS
CALORIES 495 **CARBOHYDRATES** 37G
DIETARY FIBER 10G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G
PROTEIN 21G **TOTAL FAT** 32G
SATURATED FAT 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 37MG
SODIUM 582MG

MISO

Made by fermenting soybeans with koji grains that have been inoculated with the *Aspergillus oryzae* mold, this ancient Japanese seasoning boasts many benefits when eaten often as part of a healthy diet. As a fermented food, miso promotes the growth of healthy bacteria in the gut.

Consuming fermented foods like miso may also support a healthy immune system by protecting the body against harmful microorganisms, per a 2022 review in the journal *Nutrients.*

And, according to a 2023 article in *Probiotics and Antimicrobial Proteins,* researchers have found that the beneficial bacteria in fermented foods produce by-products called postbiotics. Postbiotics may have immune-supporting properties, but more research is needed to confirm their health benefits.

A classic miso soup is a great and delicious way to protect your gut. Also try glazing salmon with red miso, low-sodium soy sauce, honey and lime juice for a flavorful and fast dinner option.

Roasted Miso-Garlic Cauliflower Bites

ACTIVE TIME: 10 min
TOTAL TIME: 40 min

Tender cauliflower florets are coated in mild white miso and garlic, complemented by the sweetness and subtle heat of sweet chili sauce, in this flavorful side dish. It's a perfect accompaniment to grilled chicken or fish. Alternatively, serve it atop rice or noodles for a simple and delicious vegetarian option.

- 3 tablespoons white miso
- 3 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon sweet chili sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large head cauliflower (3 pounds), trimmed and cut into 1- to 2-inch florets
- Cooking spray
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced, for garnish (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Whisk miso, water, cornstarch, sesame oil, chili sauce and garlic together in a medium bowl until smooth. Add cauliflower; toss well to combine. Spread on the prepared baking sheet and coat with cooking spray. Roast until tender and slightly charred, stirring halfway through, about 30 minutes. Garnish with scallions, if desired.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP
CALORIES 112 **CARBOHYDRATES** 18G
DIETARY FIBER 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G
PROTEIN 6G **TOTAL FAT** 4G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **SODIUM** 390MG

YOGURT

Yogurt is a cultured product made by adding bacteria strains to milk during the fermenting process. This makes it a source of probiotics—those live bacteria that live in the gut to keep it healthy. A 2023 study published in *BMC Microbiology* found that not only does eating yogurt increase gut biodiversity, but researchers found an association between yogurt and reduced visceral fat.

Plain cow's-milk yogurt provides nutrients that promote digestive health. The dairy aisle boasts a wide selection of yogurt varieties, including strained, kefir, goat-milk, skyr, non-dairy and more. When Greek yogurt is strained, the whey from the milk is left over, and there have been concerns that farms can't handle all the extra whey produced, per a 2020 study in *Sustainability*. More research is being done on more efficient ways to handle the issue and its environmental impact. If that's important to you when making food choices, plain regular yogurt is a great everyday option. It can be stirred into pureed veggies for a nutrient-dense soup, or top a scoop of yogurt with granola and blueberries for a well-rounded breakfast.

Chocolate–Peanut Butter Protein Shake

ACTIVE TIME: 5 min
TOTAL TIME: 5 min

This creamy high-protein shake tastes like a chocolate–peanut butter banana milkshake and will keep you satisfied for hours. You don't even need to add protein powder, thanks to the naturally occurring protein in the soy milk, yogurt and peanut butter.

- 1 cup unsweetened vanilla soy milk
- ¾ cup sliced frozen banana
- ½ cup reduced-fat plain strained yogurt
- 1 tablespoon cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon natural peanut butter

Put soy milk, banana, yogurt, cocoa powder and peanut butter in a blender; blend until smooth.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 2 CUPS
CALORIES 402 **CARBOHYDRATES** 41G
DIETARY FIBER 10G **TOTAL SUGARS** 20G
PROTEIN 26G **TOTAL FAT** 16G
SATURATED FAT 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 11MG
SODIUM 122MG

HABITS FOR A HEALTHY GUT

Great news for coffee lovers, and others.

BY GABY MCPHERSON, M.S., RDN, LDN
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

Our everyday health and lifestyle habits can create harm or harmony for our gut microbiome—that's where bacteria reside in your gut, numbering in the trillions. Emerging research continues to shine brightly on the powerful impact a well-functioning gut can have on whole-body health and wellness. "Promoting a balanced and diverse gut microbiome supports the immune system, enhances nutrient absorption and may even reduce the risk of developing certain gastrointestinal conditions," says Avery Zenker, a registered dietitian at EverFlex Fitness.

Prebiotic sodas, probiotic supplements and digestive enzymes marketed to help curb gas and bloat may come to mind when you think of gut health. While these products may offer perks for some, there are several habits you can incorporate every day to help keep your gut in tip-top shape.

EATING PLENTY OF CARBS

Radical food restriction is not necessary, and it could be a slippery slope for your health. For example, avoiding foods that seem too high in carbohydrates or sugar is a common healthy-eating strategy. Often, carbs are thought of as "bad" when, in reality, there are several "bad" carbs that you should be eating, because the nutrients they harbor are good for you. "When you lower your carb intake, you can miss out on fiber—nondigestible carbohydrates that have a beneficial effect on human health and a diverse microbiome," says Marcie Vaske, M.S., LN, CNS.

Multiple types of fiber—including soluble and insoluble—work their magic on the gut to help keep you full, stabilize your blood-sugar levels and prevent constipation. Another type, called prebiotic fiber, nurtures your gut health as well. "Grains and starchy vegetables are fiber-rich foods that provide our gut with prebiotics that feed the good bacteria. Foods high in prebiotics include chicory root, Jerusalem artichoke, onions and asparagus," Vaske explains.

If you skimp on your sleep on a regular basis, the diversity of your gut microbes can become compromised.

Contrary to what you may have heard or read, you don't have to restrict carbs to achieve your health goals. "Restrictive diets do more harm than good," says Supriya Rao, M.D., managing partner at Integrated Gastroenterology Consultants.

EATING THE PEEL

Apple, cucumber and carrot peels can pile up in the trash or compost bin because of their texture and appearance. But depending on the produce, putting down the peeler and keeping the outer layers on can be a good thing. "These outer layers are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that support gut health and overall well-being," says Zenker. "Plus, vegetable skins serve up prebiotic fiber, nourishing your gut bacteria." Though some skins may be too tough or rough to enjoy, some you might consider eating are the peels of carrots, potatoes, beets, eggplant, kiwi, cucumber, citrus fruits and some winter squash, according to Zenker. You can make munching on skins more tasty by whipping up a smoothie or air-frying the peels.

DRINKING COFFEE

"Some people may shy away from coffee because they believe it's harsh on the stomach, but moderate coffee consumption may have beneficial effects on gut function, potentially supporting digestion and positively influencing the makeup of your gut bacteria," says Krista Wale, RD, LDN, owner of Louisiana Nutrition Associates.

If you enjoy a morning cup and your body tolerates it well, coffee can offer health-promoting nutrients that have been studied for their effects on the gut. "Coffee is filled with polyphenols, a family of plant compounds that are active in the body and contribute to health by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress," says Vaske. "They may be capable of increasing the amount of beneficial bacteria in your gut, and they have protective effects against harmful types of bacteria." Plus, no matter if it's decaf or caffeinated, research shows that coffee may help one-third of the population with regular bowel movements, which are an important part of healthy digestion.

GETTING PLENTY OF SLEEP

If you ever resist sleep to catch up on work, exercise or binge-watch Netflix, you're familiar with the idea that prioritizing quality slumber sometimes gets put on the back burner. "About 33 percent of Americans get less than seven hours of sleep a night," says Rao. While we know we should be catching more zzz's for energy, focus and a better mood, we may not realize that getting less-than-optimal sleep (in quality and quantity) affects the way our gut operates. "We know that sleep plays a vital role in many areas, including brain function, metabolism, appetite regulation and immune function," explains Rao.

Research has shown that there's a special connection between your gut microbiota and sleep via the relationship between your gut and brain, also known as the gut-brain axis. In fact, your gut is known as a "second brain," and agents produced in the gut, like short-chain fatty acids, are known to communicate with the central nervous system. "When we experience sleep deprivation, from [a low amount of] nightly sleep to shift work or even jet lag, this impacts our circadian rhythms, which in turn can change the diversity of our microbiome and the structure of gut microbes," explains Vaske.

So is it better to forgo a bit of sleep to exercise or get something else done? Probably not. "If you compromise your nightly sleep to under seven hours to get up early and work out, the diversity of your gut microbes can become compromised, which can increase gut issues or put you at a greater risk of having gut disturbances," says Vaske.

EATING A VARIETY OF FOODS

Often, we fall into the habit of adding the same exact items to our grocery list, cooking identical meals each week and eating what amounts to a monotonous diet. Overall, a consistent intake of nutrient-rich foods is the goal, and you can be healthy and eat the same nutrient-rich foods every day. That said, eating a diet filled with more variety may help strengthen your gut for ultimate wellness. "By embracing dietary diversity, we provide a broader spectrum of nutrients, nurturing the growth and diversity of gut bacteria. A diverse microbiome is closely linked to enhanced digestion, better immune function and reduced gastrointestinal and chronic metabolic disorders," says Martha Theran, M.S., RD, LDN, of the Pritikin Longevity Center.

Give your eating plan a little mix-up by selecting seasonal veggies to throw into a stir-fry, choosing a different type of nut to add to your trail mix or air-frying a different kind of fish. "Just by changing up your diet, you can alter your gut flora profile in just a few days, so it pays to keep plenty of different fruits and vegetables, healthy proteins and fats in your daily diet," says Vaske.

EATING FULL-FAT FOODS

Butter, ghee and coconut oil are often demonized for their high saturated fat content. But there's no reason to banish them completely. According to the USDA's 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, saturated fat should make up no more than 10 percent of your daily caloric intake, which is about 22 grams of saturated fat for someone following a 2,000-calorie diet. And both butter and ghee contain butyric acid, a short-chain fatty acid that's known to promote gut health and lessen inflammation. So feel free to enjoy them in moderation—it turns out your gut may thank you.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Remember, your path to better gut health isn't limited to a 60-day supply of probiotic pills. Instead, focus on small changes in your everyday routine that you can sustain for the long haul. From adding new foods to your grocery list to enjoying your coffee and even peeling your fruit less often, new habits may change up your digestion and support a thriving microbiome.

/// CHAPTER THREE ///

IMMUNE SUPPORT

THERE'S NO STRONG EVIDENCE THAN ANY ONE FOOD BOOSTS IMMUNITY, BUT PROTEIN, ZINC AND VITAMINS A, C, D AND E CAN KEEP THE IMMUNE SYSTEM FUNCTIONING PROPERLY.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

Chicken Cutlets with Garlic Tomato Sauce
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TOMATOES

All kinds of tomatoes—cherry, Campari, beefsteak and more—are rich in vitamins and minerals that may help stave off disease. They contain vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium and lycopene. An extensive 2022 review published in *Biology* found that a diet rich in tomatoes is associated with a wide range of health benefits, potentially lowering the risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, neurodegenerative disease and bowel disease. It's also been linked to improved skin health, exercise recovery and immune response.

Tomatoes are packed with vitamin C and the antioxidant lycopene, which helps increase the immune system's ability to fight off cold and flu germs. A 2021 review published in Oxidative Medicine and Cellular Longevity also noted that due to the lycopene, eating tomatoes regularly may help protect against heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cooking tomatoes makes the lycopene more available to the body, so the heat boosts their health properties, and roasting them brings out even more sweetness. Raw cherry tomatoes as a snack or in a salad preserves their vitamin C content—plus they add a sweet burst of flavor to everything.

Chicken Cutlets with Garlic Tomato Sauce

ACTIVE TIME: 20 min
TOTAL TIME: 20 min

This quick-cooking, high-protein dish is perfect for any weeknight. Cook down cherry tomatoes with a little wine until they burst and become jammy, creating a luscious sauce to pair with chicken. A pinch of sugar at the end balances the sauce's acidity.

- 1 pound chicken cutlets
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 (10 ounce) basket cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 3 large cloves garlic, grated
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh sage
- 1 tablespoon butter
- Pinch of granulated sugar

1. Sprinkle chicken with ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the chicken and cook, flipping once, until browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 165°F, 4 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer to a serving plate.
2. Add tomatoes, wine, garlic and the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt to the pan. Increase heat to medium-high and cook, stirring, until the liquid has thickened and the tomatoes have burst, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in parsley, sage, butter and sugar. Serve over the chicken.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 3 OZ. CHICKEN & ¼ CUP SAUCE **CALORIES** 220 **CARBOHYDRATES** 5G **DIETARY FIBER** 1G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G **PROTEIN** 24G **TOTAL FAT** 9G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 70MG **SODIUM** 353MG

Tomato, Mozzarella & Arugula Sandwich

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 15 min

This vegetarian sandwich is packed with protein, thanks to creamy, fresh mozzarella and walnuts blended into the roasted red pepper spread. The spread, reminiscent of romesco sauce, is versatile and can also be served as a dip or sauce, adding depth and complexity to dishes like grilled meats, seafood and vegetables, or as a topping for pasta.

- 1 cup roasted red peppers, plus 1 tablespoon liquid from jar, divided
- 1 cup walnuts
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 (3 ounce) ciabatta rolls, split horizontally
- 2 cups loosely packed baby arugula
- ½ cup thinly sliced red onion
- 8 (1 ounce) slices fresh mozzarella cheese
- 1 medium tomato, cored and cut into 8 slices, ¼-inch thick
- ¼ teaspoon salt

1. Combine roasted red peppers, walnuts, vinegar, paprika and garlic powder in a food processor; process until a slightly chunky spread forms, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape down sides as needed and adding liquid from the pepper jar, 1 teaspoon at a time, as needed to help puree the mixture.
2. Spread the pepper mixture evenly on cut sides of ciabatta rolls (about 2 tablespoons each). Top each bottom slice with ½ cup arugula, 2 tablespoons sliced onion, 2 mozzarella slices and 2 tomato slices. Sprinkle with salt. Top with the remaining ciabatta slices. Cut the sandwiches in half and serve.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SANDWICH **CALORIES** 560 **CARBOHYDRATES** 50G **DIETARY FIBER** 6G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G **ADDED SUGARS** 0G **PROTEIN** 23G **TOTAL FAT** 31G **SATURATED FAT** 8G **CHOLESTEROL** 40MG **SODIUM** 773MG

Spaghetti with Italian Turkey Sausage, Arugula & Burst Tomatoes

ACTIVE TIME: 25 min
TOTAL TIME: 25 min

Complete happiness in a bowl: pasta, sausage, tomatoes and herbs. The tomatoes get sweet and tender and turn into sauce with the stock and the pasta. There's no butter, but the sauce is rich and silky. Adding the herbs at the end gives the dish a pop of color and flavor.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 6 ounces sweet or hot Italian turkey sausage, casings removed
- 12 ounces cherry tomatoes or multicolor cherry tomatoes, halved if large
- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- 6 small garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 2½ cups unsalted chicken stock
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 8 ounces whole-wheat spaghetti, broken in half
- 5 ounces baby arugula
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- ¼ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

1. Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high. Add sausage, and cook, stirring often to break into pieces, until sausage is barely pink, about 4 minutes. Add tomatoes, onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until vegetables are softened, about 4 more minutes. Add wine and cook until reduced by half, about 2 minutes, scraping bottom of pan to release any browned bits. Add chicken stock and pepper and bring to a boil. Add broken pasta and stir, making sure pasta is mostly submerged. Reduce heat to medium; cover and cook until pasta is al dente, about 7 minutes.

2. Remove from heat and stir in arugula and vinegar. Toss until arugula is wilted, about 1 minute. Spoon 1½ cups into each of 4 bowls and top each with basil and 1 tablespoon of cheese.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 379 **CARBOHYDRATES** 51G
DIETARY FIBER 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G
PROTEIN 23G **TOTAL FAT** 12G
SATURATED FAT 2G **SODIUM** 479MG

GARLIC

The flavorful allium is central to a wide range of cultural dishes, making it a favorite seasoning of many people in many places.

Garlic packs a nutritional punch along with a flavorful one. Chronic inflammation can harm your immunity by reducing your white blood cell count. A 2021 review in the *Journal of Clinical Translational Research* found that research into the effects of garlic extract showed that it helps reduce systemic inflammation and restore white blood cell levels. This is largely thanks to allicin, a sulfur-containing compound found in allium foods like onions, chives and garlic.

Further, a 2019 review published in *Trends in Food Science & Technology* found that not only does allicin show both antibacterial and antifungal properties, but the compound may have potential in the prevention and treatment of diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Garlic goes well with almost any kind of protein, including chicken, fish and tofu. It's also great sautéed with some white beans and kale for a delicious plant-based dish. Cook minced garlic in a pan with oil to infuse the oil with a punchy flavor. Then add your favorite veggies.

One-Pot Garlicky Shrimp & Broccoli

ACTIVE TIME: 20 min
TOTAL TIME: 20 min

Shrimp and broccoli cook quickly in this easy, one-pot recipe, making it perfect for busy weeknights. Serve it over whole grains or rice.

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 6 medium cloves garlic, sliced, divided
- 4 cups small broccoli florets
- ½ cup diced red bell pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 1 pound peeled and deveined raw shrimp (21–30 count)
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice, plus more to taste

1. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add half the garlic and cook until beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Add broccoli, bell pepper and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Cover and cook, stirring once or twice and adding 1 tablespoon water if the pot is too dry, until the vegetables are tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and keep warm.

2. Increase heat to medium-high and add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pot. Add the remaining garlic and cook until beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Add shrimp and the remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper; cook, stirring, until the shrimp are just cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Return the broccoli mixture to the pot along with lemon juice and stir to combine.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP
CALORIES 214 **CARBOHYDRATES** 6G
DIETARY FIBER 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 25G **TOTAL FAT** 11G
SATURATED FAT 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 183MG
SODIUM 441MG

APPLES

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away." This popular saying might have some truth to it. Apples are rich in several micronutrients, such as iron, zinc, vitamins C and E and polyphenols. According to a 2022 review published in the *Journal of Food Science*, these compounds can help stave off chronic diseases. Apples are powerful healing foods. A 2022 study in *Antioxidants* showed that researchers are looking for ways to include apples in healthcare products for the prevention and treatment of diseases caused by inflammation.

Including apples in your diet might even be linked to a lower risk of developing certain kinds of cancers. For example, a 2021 review in *Nutrients* looked at studies that found that the consumption of apples seems to be related to a reduced risk of lung, bladder, breast, pancreatic, colorectal, pharynx, esophagus, ovary, renal and prostate cancers.

Not to mention, there are several easy ways to add apples to your daily eating pattern. You can stuff halved apples with sausage and grains before roasting. You can pair sliced apples with Cheddar on crackers for a delicious snack. You can simply dice them up and toss them into a fresh salad.

Or, you can just enjoy a whole apple! Daily!

Butternut Squash Soup with Apple Grilled Cheese Sandwiches

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 45 min
Layering apple slices into grilled cheese adds a little crunch to a favorite soup dipper. And creamy butternut squash soup with ginger, cumin and turmeric is a

nice change of pace from grilled cheese's usual partner, tomato soup. If you have a sensitive palate, you can cut back on the spices. Be sure to use seasonal squash for the best flavor. Serve the duo as a comforting and easy weeknight dinner for the family. The soup keeps well in the fridge, so save leftovers for lunch or dinner later in the week.

- 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil or coconut oil, divided
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, plus more for garnish
- 5 cups cubed (1 inch) peeled butternut squash
- 1 (15 ounce) can light coconut milk, divided
- 2 cups low-sodium no-chicken broth or chicken broth
- 1 small apple, thinly sliced, divided
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 4 slices whole-wheat country bread
- 1 cup shredded smoked Gouda or Cheddar cheese
- Ground pepper for garnish

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and ginger; cook, stirring, until starting to soften, about 3 minutes. Add cumin, turmeric and cayenne; cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Add squash, coconut milk (reserve 4 tablespoons for garnish, if desired), broth, half the apple slices and salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the squash is tender, about 20 minutes. Stir in lime juice. Remove from heat.

2. Puree the soup in the pan using an immersion blender or in batches in a blender. (Use caution when blending hot liquids.)

3. Divide ½ cup cheese between 2 slices of bread. Top with the remaining apple slices, cheese and bread. Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the sandwiches and cook until lightly browned on both sides and the cheese is melted, about 2 minutes per side. Cut in half. Garnish the soup with the reserved coconut milk, more cayenne and ground pepper, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS SOUP & ½ SANDWICH **CALORIES** 419 **CARBOHYDRATES** 43G **DIETARY FIBER** 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G **PROTEIN** 14G **TOTAL FAT** 23G **SATURATED FAT** 11G **CHOLESTEROL** 26MG **SODIUM** 827MG

SWEET POTATOES

These starchy vegetables are a good source of carbohydrates and fiber, and their vibrant orange hue delivers certain micronutrients, like vitamin A. Sweet potatoes are also exceptionally high in beta-carotene. Beta-carotene is a type of provitamin A—plant pigments that are converted into vitamin A in the body, per the National Institutes of Health. It's found primarily in orange, yellow and green plant foods such as carrots, broccoli, tomatoes and sweet potatoes.

Higher consumption of antioxidants like beta-carotene and vitamin C, also found in sweet potatoes, is linked to a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, as confirmed by a 2022 systematic review published in *Nutrients*. Soluble fiber helps lower blood cholesterol levels, and having high cholesterol increases your risk of heart disease. About half of the fiber in sweet potatoes is soluble fiber, so the spuds are a great way to protect your heart. Sweet potatoes are also rich in phytochemicals, plant compounds that protect the body from illness and infection, including carotenoids, vitamin E, flavonoids and anthocyanins.

Sweet potatoes can be diced and sautéed for a tasty breakfast hash or halved and roasted for a healthy side. They're great in salads, too. And mashed sweet potatoes are delicious.

Sweet Potato & Black Bean Chili

ACTIVE TIME: 25 min
TOTAL TIME: 40 min

Make a double batch of this quick vegetarian chili and eat it for lunch the next day, or freeze the extras for another night.

- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium-large sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 4 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground chipotle chile
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2½ cups water
- 2 (15 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed
- 1 (14 ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 4 teaspoons lime juice
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro

1. Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add sweet potato and onion and cook, stirring often, until the onion begins to soften, about 4 minutes. Add garlic, chili powder, cumin, chipotle and salt and cook, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Add water and bring to a simmer. Cover, reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook until the sweet potato is tender, 10 to 12 minutes.
2. Add beans, tomatoes and lime juice; increase heat to high and return to a simmer, stirring often. Reduce heat and simmer until slightly reduced, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 2 CUPS **CALORIES** 323 **CARBOHYDRATES** 55G **DIETARY FIBER** 16G **TOTAL SUGARS** 13G **PROTEIN** 13G **TOTAL FAT** 8G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **SODIUM** 573MG

GINGER

Ginger has been used for thousands of years to help treat nausea, diarrhea, colds, arthritis, menstrual cramps and more. Modern research has delved into ginger's pain-relieving qualities. According to a 2021 review in *Pharmaceutics,* ginger seems to have a delayed therapeutic action, so it can be effective for chronic pain but might not be helpful for more acute pain, such as from a headache.

Ginger's anti-inflammatory properties are what has truly earned the root its accolades. It contains the antioxidant gingerol and other compounds in that have been found to improve inflammatory conditions from the common cold to inflammatory bowel disease.

Many dishes like curries and golden milk combine ginger with vibrantly hued turmeric. Like many classic food pairings, ginger and turmeric truly are better together. A 2022 study in the journal *Molecules* goes into depth about how the chemical compounds in both ginger and turmeric work to reduce inflammation in the body. The study's authors state that because inflammation is a major contributing factor in many chronic diseases, they resoundingly recommend combining ginger and turmeric for maximal benefits.

Tinola (Filipino Ginger-Garlic Chicken Soup)

ACTIVE TIME: 45 min
TOTAL TIME: 45 min

Tinola, a comforting soup seasoned with plenty of ginger and garlic, has countless variations throughout the Philippines. The soup calls for malunggay leaves (aka moringa), which can be found fresh or frozen at Asian markets. Bok choy is a good substitute. Feel free to increase the amounts of garlic and fish sauce for an even more flavorful soup. Serve the soup on its own or with jasmine rice, quinoa or wild rice.

- 3 tablespoons canola oil or avocado oil
- ½ cup chopped yellow onion
- ¼ cup thinly sliced fresh ginger
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1½ cups peeled and cubed green papaya or chayote
- 2 cups chopped malunggay leaves or bok choy leaves
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion, ginger and garlic; cook, stirring, until the onion starts to turn translucent, about 3 minutes. Add chicken and broth; cook, stirring, until the chicken is just cooked through, about 5 minutes.

2. Add papaya (or chayote), malunggay (or bok choy), fish sauce, salt and pepper. Continue simmering until the vegetables are tender and the flavors have melded, about 5 minutes more.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 344 **CARBOHYDRATES** 14G
DIETARY FIBER 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G
PROTEIN 27G **TOTAL FAT** 21G
SATURATED FAT 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 76MG
SODIUM 663MG

BOLSTER YOUR IMMUNE HEALTH

What you eat and what you do can have a significant impact.

BY GABY MCPHERSON, M.S., RDN, LDN
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN MARIA LAURA HADDAD-GARCIA

Grandma warned, "Wet hair in winter equals a cold." Everyone and their parents has an opinion on what's good and bad for our immune system. But we can all agree that taking care of our immunity is critical to survival and well-being. "Immune health refers to how well your body can defend itself against germs, viruses and other harmful invaders," says Pam Hartnett, M.P.H., RDN, a registered dietitian nutritionist and cancer recovery coach.

While no single strategy is guaranteed to keep you in perfect health, there are many ways to naturally fuel your immune system and keep sickness at bay. "When your immune system is in good shape, it's like having a well-trained, balanced army ready to protect you," Hartnett says. Certain habits can threaten a well-functioning immune system and throw it off-kilter. But many lifestyle factors can support it. While going out into the cold with post-shower hair probably won't cause sniffles, here are four things many people believe are bad for your health but that, it turns out, are more immune-supportive than you may think.

EATING LOTS OF FRUIT

All too often, fruits get the side-eye for their sugar content. While "nature's candy" is a source of naturally occurring sugars, many people overlook fruit's fiber, antioxidants and essential vitamins and minerals like vitamins C, A and E and zinc.

The fiber in fruit, for example, which is a good friend to immune health. "Fiber supports a healthy gut microbiome, and 80 percent of your immune

system is housed in your gut," points out Courtney Coe, M.S., RDN, LDN, CSCS, CLT, of Well Theory. When we eat raspberries or other fibrous fruits such as apples, their fiber gets broken down, or fermented, by gut bacteria in the colon, producing short-chain fatty acids. SCFAs may promote less inflammation and more gut bacteria growth and diversity. And that's very good news for your gut. Changes in gut bacteria or a less diverse bacterial environment are associated with a higher risk of several diseases.

Further, inflammation and oxidative stress both influence your immune response. Oxidative stress happens when there's an imbalance of antioxidants and free radicals in your body, which can lead to inflammation. Free radicals are molecules that can cause cell damage. Whether it's mangoes, papayas or avocados, fruits are natural sources of antioxidants. "Antioxidants, such as flavonoids, polyphenols and carotenoids, help reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, which can negatively impact immunity," Coe explains.

Research shows that thanks to their wealth of nutrients, fruits (and veggies) have protective

benefits against chronic diseases that can wreak havoc on immunity and well-being. If you have diabetes, talk with your dietitian or medical provider about how to safely fit fruit into your eating plan to keep your blood sugars balanced and your immune system in check.

TAKING FEWER SUPPLEMENTS

At the first sign of a sore throat, you might be scrambling for the colloidal silver or vitamin C powder packet. Supplements may be seen as a silver lining for immune support, but the truth is, some aren't helpful for immunity. "Some people rely too much on instant 'immune boosts,' put too much faith in supplements, and neglect to maintain an overall healthy and sustainable lifestyle," says Raj Dasgupta, M.D., FACP, FCCP, FAASM, chief medical advisor for Sleep Advisor. And for overall immune health? A supplement stock of so-called immune enhancers may not be necessary. "In reality, megadoses of supplements like vitamin C, echinacea or zinc are a waste of money, and there's no conclusive evidence they prevent colds and flu. For most adults, a healthy and balanced eating pattern should not require additional supplementation," says Sarah Hormachea, M.S., RD, BC-ADM, CDCES, a registered dietitian at Nourish. Following a well-balanced eating pattern with immune-supportive foods is the ticket to long-term immune health, while supplements can be, well, a supplement to your healthy diet if needed.

GETTING OUT IN THE SUN AND COLD TEMPERATURES

Although it's well known that excess UV radiation from sunlight is linked to various forms of cancer, staying in the shade can steal our chances of greater immunity. "Spending time outside, even in the cold, helps promote vitamin D production," says Coe. Vitamin D deficiency is a public health concern across the globe, and a growing reliance upon devices often keeps us indoors. Vitamin D helps equip your immune system to better fight off viruses and bacteria.

"Combine the fresh air and physical activity, and you've got stress reduction too. Plus, you're exposed to beneficial microbes in nature that support your gut and immune health," says Coe. One study suggests that for safe sun time, limit it to five to 30 minutes each day during very sunny seasons.

Cold temperatures get flak for causing illness, but taking a dip in chilly water or cold-water plunging may benefit immunity. "While being cold doesn't directly 'boost' your immune system, exposure to cold temperatures, such as cold showers, cold plunges or outdoor activities in cold weather, can enhance immune function by increasing the production of certain immune cells, like T cells, and lower inflammation," says Alayna Hutchinson, M.S., LDN, RDN, a registered dietitian nutritionist at Pendulum, a microbiome biotech company.

INCORPORATING ANIMAL PROTEINS

Plant-based diets have become pretty popular. Still, there's confusion and skepticism over the benefits of animal-based proteins such as eggs, meat and fish. "Many believe that red meat and eggs are harmful to their health. Like anything, too much of a good thing may not be a good thing, but when it comes to your immune system, animal proteins are not only OK but extremely valuable," says Coe. Animal proteins contain essential amino acids that your body uses to make particular proteins your immune system needs. Further, a lack of important nutrients like zinc and vitamin A can up your risk for infections. Luckily, animal proteins provide many vital nutrients to your immune health, like zinc, B vitamins, iron, vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids.

Include both plant and animal proteins in your diet—it doesn't have to be just one or the other. In fact, protein intake overall must be sufficient for your body to make antibodies against infections. "Generally, protein-rich foods help keep your blood sugar balanced, which supports hormones, your gut, stress response and therefore your immune system," says Coe.

Immune health goes beyond steering clear of sickness. Embracing habits that support it long-term is important. Fruit intake, cautious supplement use, sun exposure and eating protein may all be immune-protective. "Sleep, stress, nutrition and even your gut microbiome play a huge role in immune health," says Coe. "Supporting all of these is the path to a strong immune system, since they support your body's ability to fight off infection and other external exposures."

Super Sippers

Whether you're falling short on fruits and veggies for the day or just wanting a concentrated hit of nutrients, smoothies, tonics and healthy shots can be a quick and easy solution.

Anti-Inflammatory Lemon-Blueberry Smoothie

- 1 cup frozen blueberries, plus more for garnish
- 1 medium ripe banana, peeled and frozen
- 1 cup packed baby kale
- ½ cup unsweetened plain almond milk
- ½ cup chilled unsweetened brewed green tea
- 2 tablespoons hulled hemp seeds
- ¾ teaspoon lemon zest, plus more for garnish
- 1½ tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon honey (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger

Place blueberries, banana, kale, almond milk, tea, hemp seeds, lemon zest, lemon juice, honey (if using) and ginger in a blender. Process until smooth, about 25 seconds. Pour into a glass. Garnish with additional blueberries and/or lemon zest, if desired.

Frozen Lemon-Ginger-Turmeric Shots

- 1 cup fresh lemon juice (from about 4 lemons)
- ½ cup chopped fresh ginger (about 9 inches)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh turmeric (about 3 inches) or 2 teaspoons ground turmeric
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon water
- ⅛ teaspoon cracked black pepper

1. Combine lemon juice, ginger, turmeric, honey, water and pepper in a blender. Process until smooth, 30 seconds to 1 minute.
2. Strain the juice through a fine-mesh strainer into a large measuring cup, pressing solids with a spoon to extract juice. You should have about 1 cup of juice. Discard the solids.
3. Pour the juice evenly into a 9-ounce silicone ice cube tray. Freeze until solid, at least 1 hour.
4. To make 1 serving: Bring 8 ounces water to a boil. Place 1 frozen cube in a mug or heatproof glass; add the hot water. Serve immediately.

Tart Cherry Superfood Shots

- 2 cups tart cherry juice
- ½ cup pomegranate arils, fresh or frozen (thawed)
- ⅓ cup fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons orange juice

1. Combine cherry juice, pomegranate arils, basil and orange juice in a blender. Blend on high speed until smooth.
2. Arrange a double layer of cheesecloth in a strainer and place the strainer over a shallow bowl or large glass jar. Gently pour the juice mixture into the strainer and let the liquid gradually seep through the cheesecloth and into the storage vessel. Once all of the liquid is strained, discard the solids. Cover and refrigerate the liquid until chilled, about 15 minutes, or for up to 1 week.

Green Spinach Superfood Shots

- 1 medium red apple, cored and sliced
- 2 cups packed fresh spinach
- 1 cup roughly chopped celery (2 or 3 stalks)
- 1 cup coconut water
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice

1. Combine apple, spinach, celery, coconut water and lemon juice in a blender. Blend on high speed until smooth.
2. Arrange a double layer of cheesecloth in a strainer and place the strainer over a shallow bowl or large glass jar. Gently pour the juice mixture into the strainer and let the liquid gradually seep through the cheesecloth and into the storage vessel. Once all of the liquid is strained, discard the solids. Cover and refrigerate the liquid until chilled, about 15 minutes, or for up to 1 week.

Tart Cherry Nighttime Mocktail

- 2 tablespoons hot water
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 6 fresh sage leaves, plus more for garnish
- ½ cup pure tart cherry juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- Ice
- ¾ cup sparkling water
- Lime wedges for garnish (optional)

Stir hot water and honey together in a cocktail shaker until the honey dissolves. Add sage; muddle with a muddler or the handle of a wooden spoon until the leaves are slightly bruised and fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add cherry juice and lime juice. Fill the shaker with ice; cover and shake until the outside frosts and the drink is chilled, about 15 seconds. Strain into 2 ice-filled rocks glasses. Top with sparkling water. Garnish with sage leaves and/or lime wedges, if desired.

/// CHAPTER FOUR ///

PROTEIN POWER

PROTEIN HELPS KEEP MUSCLES, BONES AND TISSUE HEALTHY. PLUS, HIGH-PROTEIN MEALS CAN KEEP YOU FULL AND SATISFIED ALL DAY LONG.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

Chickpeas alla Vodka
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LEGUMES

Versatile, flavorful, budget-friendly and nutrient-dense, legumes are plants that bear their fruit inside a pod. Beans are a mighty branch of the legume family, and these edible seeds are used across cuisines and cultures.

Despite 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendations to eat 1½ cups of beans each week for nonvegetarians and 3 cups each week for vegetarians, Americans continually fall short of that threshold. Beans have a low glycemic index, which means that they don't cause blood sugar to rise rapidly and crash, compared with foods like those made with refined grains or added sugars. Their high fiber and protein content also helps delay gastric emptying, which can increase feelings of fullness for longer. A 2023 *Nutrients* study of 15,185 people found that, over the course of a decade, bean eaters gained less weight—and visceral fat—compared with people who didn't eat beans.

There are countless ways to eat beans and legumes. For lunch, toss chickpeas into a wrap or salad. Stir a bag of frozen peas into a pot of cooked pasta for an easy way to amp up protein. But you might want to start small if you're adding more to your diet. Since they're a high-fiber, complex carbohydrate, too many of the same legumes can cause bloating. So focus on eating a variety of legume types in small amounts throughout the day.

Chickpeas alla Vodka

ACTIVE TIME: 20 min
TOTAL TIME: 20 min

This is the ultra-quick, fiber-packed dinner you've been waiting for! The sauce is enhanceed with sautéed garlic, onion and vibrant baby kale. Crispy, toasted whole-wheat bread is perfect for dipping. You can customize this dish easily by using chard or spinach in place of kale.

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ¾ cup chopped sweet onion
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 (15 ounce) cans no-salt-added chickpeas, rinsed (about 3 cups)
- ½ cup no-salt-added tomato sauce
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups vodka pasta sauce
- ½ cup half-and-half
- 4 cups baby kale
- ½ cup shaved Parmesan cheese
- 4 ounces crusty whole-wheat baguette, cut crosswise into 4 equal pieces, halved lengthwise and toasted

1. Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and just starting to brown around edges, about 4 minutes. Add garlic; cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 45 seconds.
2. Stir in chickpeas, tomato sauce, pepper, oregano, crushed red pepper and salt; cook, stirring often, until the chickpeas are warmed through, about 2 minutes. Add vodka sauce; cook, stirring occasionally, until steaming, about 2 minutes.
3. Add half-and-half; bring to a simmer over medium heat. Stir in kale; cook, stirring constantly, until wilted and bright green, about 1 minute.
4. Divide among 4 shallow bowls. Top each with 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Serve each with 2 toasted baguette pieces.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1¼ CUPS CHICKPEA MIXTURE & 2 BREAD PIECES
CALORIES 468 **CARBOHYDRATES** 57G **DIETARY FIBER** 12G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G **ADDED SUGARS** 0G **PROTEIN** 22G **TOTAL FAT** 16G **SATURATED FAT** 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 24MG **SODIUM** 688MG

Black Bean Breakfast Bowl

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 15 min

Eggs offer plenty of protein, but you can make a satisfying, high-protein breakfast without them. This bowl includes black beans, yogurt and Monterey Jack cheese, providing 15 grams of protein to keep you energized throughout the morning.

- 1½ teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small bell pepper, thinly sliced
- ¼ medium onion, thinly sliced
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed
- 1 medium avocado, sliced
- 6 tablespoons pico de gallo
- 6 tablespoons reduced-fat strained yogurt
- 6 tablespoons shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 3 tablespoons sliced pickled jalapeños
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 3 corn tortillas, warmed

1. Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add bell pepper, onion, cumin, oregano, paprika and salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are golden and fragrant, 4 to 5 minutes. Add beans; cook, stirring occasionally, until the beans are hot, 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Divide the bean mixture among 3 bowls. Top each bowl with some pico de gallo, yogurt, cheese, jalapeños, cilantro and lime juice. Serve with tortillas.

SERVINGS 3 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP & 1 TORTILLA EACH **CALORIES** 396 **CARBOHYDRATES** 46G **DIETARY FIBER** 13G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G **ADDED SUGARS** 0G **PROTEIN** 15G **TOTAL FAT** 19G **SATURATED FAT** 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 14MG **SODIUM** 554MG

One-Pot Lentil & Vegetable Soup with Parmesan

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 40 min

This soup is packed with kale and tomatoes for a filling, flavorful main dish. The Parmesan cheese rind adds nuttiness and gives the broth some body. If you avoid cheese made with rennet, look for vegetarian Parmesan cheese, which is made without it.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cups fresh or frozen chopped onion, carrot and celery mix
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- 1½ cups green or brown lentils
- 1 (15 ounce) can unsalted diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Parmesan rind (optional)
- 3 cups packed roughly chopped lacinato kale
- 1½ tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley for garnish

1. Heat oil in a Dutch oven or large pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrot and celery mix; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 6 to 10 minutes. Add garlic; cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

2. Stir in broth, lentils, tomatoes, thyme, salt, pepper, crushed red pepper and Parmesan rind, if using. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the lentils are almost tender, 15 to 25 minutes, adding water as needed to thin to desired consistency.

3. Stir in kale. Cook, covered, until the kale is tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Remove and discard the Parmesan rind, if using. Stir in vinegar. Divide the soup among 6 bowls; sprinkle with Parmesan. Garnish with parsley, if desired.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 306 **CARBOHYDRATES** 45G
DIETARY FIBER 9G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G
PROTEIN 17G **TOTAL FAT** 7G
SATURATED FAT 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 5MG
SODIUM 446MG

SALMON

Salmon is packed with omega-3 fatty acids, a type of polyunsaturated fat that is essential for overall health. But salmon is also a potent protein source: A 3-ounce portion provides around 22 grams. Research in the *Journal of Obesity & Metabolic Syndrome* in 2020 notes that a high-protein diet (which salmon can be a part of) may support weight loss, as well as prevent obesity. Sockeye salmon is also one of the best options for vitamin D. According to the NIH, a 3-ounce serving of cooked sockeye salmon provides 71 percent of your daily value for vitamin D, which is crucial for bone health.

Buying salmon in a can is a more affordable way to get this healthy seafood into your diet. Canned salmon is not just a great source of omega-3 fats, but it is one of the best sources of nondairy calcium. Canned wild salmon is typically sockeye or pink from Alaska, but check the label to make sure.

If you're buying fresh salmon and don't know where to start, the fishmonger at your local fish market or grocery store is probably a great resource. And don't be afraid of frozen salmon, as any fish are flash-frozen on the fishing boat and arrive at your store frozen. This process preserves the flavor and taste.

Crispy Salmon Rice Bowl

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 25 min

Tender pieces of salmon get a sweet, crispy teriyaki coating. Because the glaze is sweet and sugar can burn easily, it's best to roast the pieces of salmon without it and then apply the glaze to cook for just a few minutes under the broiler. We love crunchy cucumber and creamy avocado as toppings, but you should feel free to add whatever toppings you like best for your own spin on this easy meal. If you can't find Sriracha mayo, you can make your own by mixing mayo and Sriracha to your preferred spice level.

- 1 pound skinless center-cut salmon fillet, cut into 1½-inch chunks
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- ¼ cup teriyaki glaze, preferably low-sodium
- 2 cups hot cooked brown rice
- 1 cup cooked shelled edamame
- 2 scallions, sliced
- 1 cup diced cucumber
- 1 medium avocado, sliced
- 2 tablespoons Sriracha mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds (optional)

1. Position oven rack in upper third; preheat to 450°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil and coat with cooking spray. Toss salmon and sesame oil on the prepared baking sheet. Roast until opaque on the outside, about 6 minutes. Remove from the oven and turn the broiler to high. Drizzle the salmon with teriyaki glaze and toss to coat. Broil until browned, crispy and just cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, stir rice, edamame and scallions together in a medium bowl; divide among 4 bowls.
3. Divide cucumber and avocado among the bowls. Top with the salmon. Drizzle with the remaining glaze from the baking sheet and Sriracha mayonnaise. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 3 OZ. SALMON & ¾ CUP RICE MIXTURE **CALORIES** 526 **CARBOHYDRATES** 41G **DIETARY FIBER** 7G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G **ADDED SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 32G **TOTAL FAT** 26G **SATURATED FAT** 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 71MG **SODIUM** 319MG

TOFU

Among the most popular plant-based protein sources, tofu is a go-to for those following a vegetarian diet or minding their meat consumption. The USDA recommends ¼ cup or 2 ounces as a healthy serving size for tofu. Keep in mind that most nutrition labels reflect a 3-ounce serving, which is about the size of a deck of cards.

Tofu is a complete protein, meaning it contains all nine essential amino acids, and it's a great plant-based way to meet your daily protein needs. You won't find isoflavones on nutrition labels, but they're abundant in tofu, edamame and other soy products. Powerful phytochemicals with antioxidant and estrogen-like properties, isoflavones have been linked to healthier skin, and they may help reduce symptoms in menopausal women.

At one point, isoflavones were thought to increase the risk for breast cancer due to their hormonal effect, but more recent studies have suggested the opposite. In a 2024 review in *JNCI Cancer Spectrum,* soy isoflavones were associated with a 26 percent reduced risk of breast cancer recurrence, according to a meta-analysis that included six of the studies. The results were most notable among cancer survivors who were in menopause.

Extra-firm tofu can be diced and air-fried to top grain bowls and salads. Silken tofu is a great base for salad dressing, smoothies, soups, dips and sauces.

Tofu, Mushroom & Bok Choy Soba Noodle Bowls

ACTIVE TIME: 20 min
TOTAL TIME: 20 min

Soba noodles are made with whole-grain buckwheat, upping the fiber count in these brothy bowls and adding nutty flavor. Thick and chewy udon noodles make a good alternative.

- 3 tablespoons canola oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, grated
- 4 scallions, sliced, greens and whites separated, divided
- 1 serrano pepper, thinly sliced
- 4 cups low-sodium no-chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons reduced-sodium tamari or soy sauce
- 2 heads baby bok choy, thinly sliced
- 5 ounces sliced shiitake mushroom caps
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces buckwheat soba or udon noodles
- 1 (14 ounce) package extra-firm tofu, drained and cut into bite-size cubes
- Fresh cilantro for garnish

1. Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon canola oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add sesame oil, ginger, garlic, scallion whites and serrano and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add broth and tamari (or soy sauce) and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer while you prepare vegetables and noodles.
3. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons canola oil in a large skillet or flat-bottom wok over high heat. Add bok choy and shiitakes and cook, stirring occasionally, until well browned, about 8 minutes. Sprinkle with salt. Remove from heat.
4. Cook noodles in the boiling water according to package directions. Drain and divide among 4 serving bowls. Top with the vegetables and tofu and ladle on the hot broth. Top with scallion greens and garnish with cilantro, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 2 CUPS
CALORIES 459 **CARBOHYDRATES** 54G
DIETARY FIBER 7G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G
PROTEIN 20G **TOTAL FAT** 19G
SATURATED FAT 2G **SODIUM** 706MG

QUINOA

Quinoa is one of the most nutritious whole grains to add to your diet—it's packed with protein, fiber and antioxidants. It is a great choice for people looking for plant-based protein sources; it's a complete protein, containing all nine of the essential amino acids. A 2022 study from the journal *Nutrients* highlighted the prevalence of both amino acids and protein in quinoa. The researchers went so far as to suggest that quinoa could deliver a solution to the world's malnutrition crisis.

This fluffy grain is also great for people with celiac disease following a strict gluten-free diet. According to a 2020 *Proceedings* study, quinoa seeds contain a gluten-free protein with ample amino acids. Malting the quinoa seeds—a process involving soaking and germination—enhances nutrient absorption. The amino acids, simple sugars and fatty acids released during malting move more easily through your intestines during digestion.

You can store a quinoa, oats and chia-seed mix in an airtight container for hearty oatmeal. You can bulk up a veggie-loaded soup by stirring in cooked quinoa, or blend it into a smoothie with pineapple, banana, honey and almond milk.

Baghali Pollow with Quinoa (Persian-Style Quinoa and Beans with Chicken)

ACTIVE TIME: 55 min
TOTAL TIME: 1½ hr

This adaptation of baghali pollow, a traditional Persian layered rice dish, is made with quinoa instead of basmati rice. Plenty of fresh herbs and fragrant spices and a trifecta of protein—quinoa, chicken and beans—ensure the dish is both flavorful and satisfying.

- ¼ teaspoon ground saffron
- 3 ice cubes
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast, trimmed and cubed (1-inch)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups white quinoa, rinsed well
- 1 bunch fresh dill, minced, plus more for serving
- 1 bunch fresh parsley, minced, plus more for serving
- 1 bunch fresh chives, minced, plus more for serving
- 2 cloves garlic, halved
- 2 cups frozen lima beans or shelled edamame

1. Place saffron in a small bowl and add ice cubes. Set aside until the ice melts, about 45 minutes.
2. Heat a large pot over medium heat. Add oil and onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Add chicken, salt, turmeric, cumin and pepper; mix well. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is no longer pink on the outside, 5 to 6 minutes. Add broth and 1 tablespoon reserved saffron water. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook until the liquid is reduced by one-third and the chicken is cooked through, 25 to 30 minutes.
3. Add quinoa, dill, parsley, chives and garlic to the pot. Stir to combine, then stir in beans (or edamame). Bring the mixture to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is mostly absorbed and the quinoa is tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Cover tightly and let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork. Stir in the remaining saffron water before serving. Garnish with more herbs, if desired.

SERVINGS 8 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP
CALORIES 392 **CARBOHYDRATES** 41G
DIETARY FIBER 7G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 38G **TOTAL FAT** 8G
SATURATED FAT 1G **CHOLESTEROL** 83MG
SODIUM 254MG

WALNUTS

All nuts come with their own health perks, but wrinkly-looking walnuts have the most good-for-you polyphenols when compared with other nuts. Plus, walnuts are the only nut to deliver a significant amount of (plant-based) omega-3 fats. Their combination of protein, fiber and healthy fats can help stabilize blood-sugar levels, which is crucial to the management of type 2 diabetes. A 2023 review published in *Nutrients* showed that a higher total intake of nuts, including walnuts, was associated with a reduced risk for type 2 diabetes.

If weight management is a priority for you take note: A September 2019 study in *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health* found that when people make nuts a regular part of their diet, it's likely that they'll gain less weight in the long term (and have a lower risk of becoming obese).

Enjoy walnuts plain, pair them with a fruit—bananas and walnuts make a great combo—or sprinkle them onto salads. Walnuts also pair well with rich cheeses.

Quick Walnut Tacos

ACTIVE TIME: 15 min
TOTAL TIME: 15 min

At Trio Plant-Based in Minneapolis, the first Black-owned plant-based restaurant in Minnesota, chef-owner Louis Hunter uses walnuts as a protein-rich substitute for ground beef to make these tacos. The ground nuts mimic the texture of meat quite nicely.

- 2¼ cups walnut halves
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1½ teaspoons paprika
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon reduced-sodium tamari
- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed
- 2 cups shredded iceberg lettuce
- 1 cup diced tomato
- ½ cup diced onion
- ½ cup fresh salsa or pico de gallo
- 8 corn tortillas, warmed
- 4 tablespoons vegan sour cream (optional)

1. Place walnuts in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped but not ground. Add cumin, garlic powder, onion powder, paprika and salt. Pulse just until blended. Transfer to a large skillet; toast over medium heat until heated through and fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add vinegar to taste and tamari and mix well.

2. Serve the walnut mixture, beans, lettuce, tomato, onion and salsa (or pico de gallo) in tortillas. Top with sour cream, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 2 TACOS
CALORIES 631 **CARBOHYDRATES** 62G
DIETARY FIBER 14G **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G
PROTEIN 19G **TOTAL FAT** 40G
SATURATED FAT 4G **SODIUM** 537MG

CHICKEN

A 2021 Technomic survey revealed that 84 percent of consumers globally order chicken from a restaurant or dining establishment at least once a month. Chicken is a versatile protein source and rich in nutrients such as selenium, phosphorus and niacin (vitamin B3). Chicken is considered to be a complete protein, meaning that it contains all nine essential amino acids that our bodies cannot make on their own. Plus, chicken contains tryptophan, an amino acid that is responsible for raising serotonin, the feel- good neurochemical that can help support a healthy mood, according to a 2021 review in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences.*

A 4-ounce serving of chicken provides 35 grams of lean protein. And while it is true that chicken thighs tend to contain more fat and cholesterol than breast meat (which has 3 grams total fat and 0.7 grams saturated fat per 3-ounce serving, per the USDA), both can fit into the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendations for fat intake. If you prefer the juicy dark meat of chicken thighs to that of the leaner breast, enjoy it with plenty of vegetables and whole grains to amp up the nutritional profile.

Crispy Pesto Chicken with Whipped Feta & Tomatoes

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 50 min

These crispy chicken cutlets, flavored with pesto and topped with juicy burst tomatoes, are served with creamy whipped feta. Seek out feta cheese in brine and crumble it by hand for the best results. While we love the vibrant yellow color and sweet flavor of Sungold cherry tomatoes, any cherry or grape tomato will work well here.

- 2 ounces feta cheese in brine, drained and crumbled (about ½ cup)
- 1 clove garlic, grated
- 4 tablespoons whole-milk plain strained yogurt, divided
- 4½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice, divided
- 2 teaspoons water plus 2 tablespoons, divided
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups whole-wheat panko breadcrumbs
- 1 large egg
- 3 tablespoons refrigerated basil pesto, divided
- 4 (4 ounce) chicken cutlets, patted dry
- ¼ teaspoon salt, divided
- 2 cups Sungold cherry tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- ¼ teaspoon Aleppo pepper (optional)

1. Combine feta, garlic, 2 tablespoons yogurt, 1 tablespoon oil and 1 teaspoon lemon juice in a food processor; process until very smooth, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl once or twice.
2. With the processor running, slowly stream in 2 teaspoons water through the chute; process until the mixture appears whipped, about 2 minutes, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons yogurt; pulse until incorporated, about 3 (1-second) pulses. Transfer the whipped feta to a medium bowl; cover and refrigerate until ready to use.
3. Place flour in a shallow dish and place panko in a separate shallow dish. Crack egg into a third shallow dish. Add 1 tablespoon pesto and 1 tablespoon water to the egg; whisk until combined. Working with 1 cutlet at a time, dredge in flour, turning to coat. Place the floured cutlet in the egg mixture; turn to coat, letting excess drip back into the dish. Place the cutlet in the panko; turn to coat, patting lightly to adhere. Place on a large plate. Repeat with the remaining cutlets. (Discard any remaining egg mixture, flour and panko.)
4. Heat 1½ tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add 2 breaded cutlets; cook, flipping once, until golden brown and crispy on both sides and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 165°F, 4 to 6 minutes. (Reduce heat to medium-low as needed to prevent burning.) Transfer the cutlets to a clean plate; cover loosely with foil to keep warm. Repeat with another 1½ tablespoons oil and the remaining 2 cutlets. Sprinkle the chicken with ⅛ teaspoon salt.
5. Wipe the skillet clean. Heat the remaining 1½ teaspoons oil over medium-high heat. Add tomatoes; cook, stirring occasionally, until starting to blister, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in pepper and the remaining 1 teaspoon lemon juice and ⅛ teaspoon salt.
6. Spread the whipped feta on a platter; sprinkle with Aleppo pepper, if desired. Arrange the chicken cutlets on top. Spoon the burst tomatoes over the chicken. Stir the remaining 2 tablespoons pesto and 1 tablespoon water together in a small bowl. Drizzle over the chicken.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUTLET, ABOUT 2 TBSP. FETA MIXTURE & ABOUT ¼ CUP TOMATOES **CALORIES** 486 **CARBOHYDRATES** 24G **DIETARY FIBER** 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G, **PROTEIN** 37G **TOTAL FAT** 27G **SATURATED FAT** 6G **CHOLESTEROL** 129MG **SODIUM** 476MG

HOW MUCH PROTEIN DO YOU NEED?

The daily requirement isn't one-size-fits-all.

BY MICAELA YOUNG, M.S.
REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN ELIZABETH WARD, M.S., RDN

Protein is the stuff of life. From your hair to your fingernails to your muscles, it is the glue that holds each cell in your body together, and it makes up many major hormones and antibodies. That's why getting enough protein in your daily diet is so important.

New evidence suggests that exactly how much you need depends on a host of personal factors: your age, your health, your activity level and whether you're pregnant. But how much do you need in a day, really?

Here, we show you how much protein you need to eat, how to calculate your needs, how much protein is too much and which people may need more. Current guidelines, established by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 2002, recommend that adults 19 years and older get 10 to 35 percent of their daily calories from protein. That's about 200 to 700 calories from protein for a 2,000-calorie diet. Another way to calculate how much protein you need each day is to multiply 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of your body weight. With a little math, this translates to 54 grams of protein for a 150-pound female and 65 grams for a 180-pound male.

Here are some examples of 10 grams of protein:

- 2 small eggs
- 2½ tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- ¾ cup cooked black beans
- 1 cup uncooked oats
- ½ cup plain strained yogurt

As meat, poultry and seafood are the leading protein sources for many, here's a handy trick for calculating grams of protein: 1 ounce of meat, chicken or fish has about 7 grams, with a 3- to 4-ounce cooked portion (a piece of about the size of a deck of cards) providing up to 30 grams. But here's the catch: The IOM's recommendations set the minimum amount of protein you need to eat in order to avoid falling short of this vital nutrient—not getting enough protein could lead to progressive muscle loss and other health issues.

Recent research suggests that aiming for more—for example, between 1.3 and 1.8 grams per kilogram of body weight daily (approximately 88 to 122 grams for women, 105 to 145 grams for men)—may be optimal, especially when it comes to warding off age-related muscle loss, according to a 2019 review in *Nutrients*. So does this mean you can eat a 12-ounce steak for dinner? Not exactly.

Protein deficiency in the U.S. is a rarity, and if you're eating a varied diet, there's really no need to go out of your way to "beef" up your intake. But how you spread your protein out throughout

the day may matter just as much as how much of it you eat.

Americans' consumption of protein is skewed: We typically skimp on it in the morning and load up on it in the evening. But research suggests that splitting up your protein evenly throughout the day is the best way to support your muscles.

A *Journal of Nutrition* study published in 2020 found that healthy young males who more evenly distributed their protein intake over three meals—breakfast, lunch and dinner—experienced greater muscle growth than males who had a low-protein breakfast and got most of their protein intake at lunch and dinner. Participants in both groups also engaged in strength-training exercises.

"Since we don't have a storage form of protein in our bodies besides our muscles, if we're not eating protein at each meal, we may be losing that muscle mass," says Jessica Crandall Snyder, RDN, a certified personal trainer and CEO of VitalRD, a personal-wellness consulting company. And less muscle mass could mean a decrease in metabolism (which makes it harder to lose weight).

For breakfast, try two eggs with a cup of yogurt and fruit, or ¾ cup oatmeal, ½ cup plain strained yogurt and a handful of pumpkin seeds. At lunch, toss half a chicken breast or half a can of beans into your salad for a protein boost.

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH PROTEIN?

Eating too much protein can mean missing out on nutrients from carbohydrates (like fiber) and healthy fats. That's why experts say to stick to getting about one-third of your daily calories from protein and to keep to a rough daily maximum of 2 grams per kilogram of body weight. That's about 140 grams for someone who weighs 154 pounds to 160 grams per day for someone weighing 176.

While there used to be a concern about protein intake increasing the risk of kidney stones or osteoporosis (the digestion of protein releases acids that need to be neutralized by calcium, which may be pulled from bones), research shows this isn't a concern. In fact, 2019 research in *Nutrition Today* found that eating in the higher recommended range may be beneficial for bone health, especially when you're eating enough calcium. And unless you have kidney disease, your protein intake is unlikely to cause harm.

FACTORS THAT IMPACT YOUR NEEDS

Since protein isn't one-size-fits-all, there are certain people who need more—and who may have a harder time getting enough.

Good news for those forgoing animal products: If you're eating enough calories, following a plant-based diet doesn't automatically mean you're not consuming enough protein. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the terms "complete" and "incomplete" protein are misleading. "Protein from a variety of plant foods, eaten during the course of a day, supplies enough of all indispensable (essential) amino acids when caloric requirements are met," the academy said in a 2016 position statement.

Vegetarians and vegans may need to pay a bit more attention to what foods give them the best

protein-for-calorie value than the average meat eater, but a varied diet that includes protein-rich legumes and soy will keep your body and muscles humming along just fine. Soy foods, such as tofu, tempeh and edamame, supply all of the essential amino acids, as do pistachios. Other great vegetarian sources of protein include eggs, plain strained yogurt, quinoa, seeds, nuts and nut butters.

Protein isn't just a concern for the shake-guzzling bodybuilder wanting to build muscle—or the elite distance runner trying to keep it. Adequate protein is needed at all levels of fitness.

The IOM's guidelines were based on studies of sedentary individuals. The American College of Sports Medicine, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and Dietitians of Canada recommend aiming for more protein if you're active—up to 2 grams per kilogram of body weight each day spread throughout the day—per their 2016 joint position statement in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise.* While keeping protein within 10 to 35 percent of your daily calories still applies, experts recommend consuming 15 to 25 grams of protein within an hour post-workout (an example is 1 cup of milk, 1 ounce of almonds and 5 dried apricots) to maximize results.

Does more protein equal better results? No, says Crandall, who adds that research suggests that the benefits level off after recommended intakes. "It's kind of like adding laundry detergent to your clothes—it's not going to get them cleaner—but having the right amount, at the right time, is important," she says.

Plus, the type of protein you choose could give you an athletic edge.

Foods high in a specific amino acid—the building blocks of protein—called leucine may be most effective for the maintenance, repair and growth of muscle. Animal foods, such as milk, meat, poultry, eggs and seafood, are the richest sources of leucine, which is also found in soy foods and nuts like peanuts. While you should strive to meet your protein needs from food, whey protein supplements are also high in leucine and are a research-backed option.

OLDER ADULTS

As we age, our bodies become less efficient at transforming the protein we eat into new muscle. The result is gradual muscle loss that can lead to decreased strength, frailty and loss of mobility. But you can give Father Time a one-two punch by staying active and eating enough protein.

It's not just muscle mass maintenance that protein is good for, though. The body needs protein for wound healing, supporting the immune system and maintaining the integrity of the skin—all important as we age.

A 2018 *Advances in Nutrition* review proposes that older people consume ≥1.2 grams protein per kilogram of body weight daily, and that there should be an emphasis on consuming foods rich in leucine, which plays a central role in stimulating skeletal muscle growth. The authors point out that the IOM protein recommendation doesn't appear to meet the requirements for older people to maintain skeletal muscle mass. While eating enough protein is crucial, timing matters, too. Spread out your protein—about 25 to 30 grams of it at each meal—to maximize muscle cell growth.

PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING

"Protein needs rise a minimum of 10 grams per day during the second and third trimesters, because your baby is growing—and it needs the tools to grow," says Rachel Brandeis M.S., RDN, who specializes in pregnancy nutrition. The IOM recommendation is that pregnant people eat a minimum of 1.1 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day, or about 25 more grams per day.

However, research like the 2021 review published in *Nutrients* suggests that pregnancy protein needs may be slightly higher than these previous estimates, so it's best to check in with your healthcare provider or registered dietitian to see how much protein is right for you.

As for breastfeeding mothers, your body will need more calories and protein to make enough milk and recover from pregnancy.

Protein is an important nutrient, and when you're eating a varied healthy diet, it's likely that you're getting enough. Aim to include protein-rich foods throughout your day, not just at dinner. And if you're a person who needs more protein—whether you're active, older, pregnant or breastfeeding—you may need to be more conscious of your intake to make sure you're getting what you need.

Dolly Parton with her sister Rachel Parton George.

/// CHAPTER FIVE ///

HEALING THE SOUL

THE PARTON SISTERS AND OTHER COOKS DELVE INTO THE STORIES BEHIND THEIR FAVORITE RECIPES, SHARING TRADITIONS, SECRETS AND GENERATIONAL LEGACIES.

REVIEWED BY DIETITIAN JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

Dolly Parton's Childhood Staple

BY ABIGAIL ABESAMIS DEMAREST

Cornbread is a Southern staple, but for Dolly Parton and her sister Rachel Parton George, the dish (and its hero ingredient) holds special significance in their household. Growing up, Dolly and Rachel would help their father with the harvest, and their family paid the doctor who delivered Dolly with a bag of cornmeal.

"We lived on a farm and grew our own corn," Dolly tells *EatingWell* in an exclusive interview. "We had fresh corn on the cob—roasting ears, as they call 'em—cream-style corn that we would scrape off the cob, and we also shucked that corn when it dried in the wintertime, and Daddy would take it down to the gristmill to grind into cornmeal. We had big barrels of cornmeal that Mama used to cook cornbread all through the winter."

In their new cookbook, *Good Lookin' Cookin',* Rachel shares that their mother taught her how to make cornbread when she was just 5 years old. And this Skillet Cornbread is the dish Dolly makes when she gets home from traveling. "It's one of my favorite dishes, period," she says. "If I'm making potato soup—Mama called 'em soup taters—or a big old pot of Great Northern white beans or pinto beans, you have got to have a skillet of cornbread with that." Rachel concurs. When she's making a roast—"pork roast, chuck roast, any kind of roast"—cornbread is a must. "This recipe is a staple in our life and in our family, she says. "There's never a wrong time to serve it."

For Rachel, eating well means "being gathered at the table with those you love." And for Dolly, it means eating what feels good and tastes good. "Now, I know a lot of people are all about healthy foods, and we all try to eat as well as we can," she says. "But to me, eating well is really enjoying what you're eating and having a good time doing it."

Skillet Cornbread

ACTIVE TIME: 10 min
TOTAL TIME: 35 min

Everyone needs a good cast-iron skillet. In the South, it's not uncommon for a bride to receive one as a wedding gift—and not always a new one! One of the best traditions we enjoy is when a well-used, well-seasoned cast-iron skillet is handed down through generations, like our Mama's were. We both still have—and use—skillets of hers that have made cornbread more times than we'll ever know.

- **5 tablespoons bacon grease or shortening**
- **2 cups Martha White or White Lily self-rising buttermilk-enriched white cornmeal mix**
- **1½ cups whole buttermilk, well shaken**
- **1 teaspoon salt (see Note)**
- **¼ teaspoon pepper**

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Heat the bacon grease or shortening on the stovetop in an 8-inch, well-seasoned cast-iron skillet over medium heat until smoking hot. Remove from the burner.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the cornmeal mix, buttermilk, salt and pepper. Add 2 tablespoons of the hot grease or shortening into batter and mix well. Pour the batter into the hot skillet—it will sizzle a bit on the sides, but that's good! Place the skillet in the oven and bake until golden brown, about 25 minutes.
3. Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes in the pan. Slice and serve. Makes six servings.

White Lily cornmeal mix is higher in sodium than Martha White. If you use White Lily, you may want to reduce or omit the salt.

A Legacy of Black-Eyed Peas

BY TIA RAIFORD

Black-eyed peas (aka cowpeas) have a long and rich history in African societies. Their presence in the African American diet is just one aspect of this long-standing relationship. They are slow-cooked with aromatics like garlic, onions and the occasional smoked ham hock or turkey neck; mashed, breaded and formed into fritters for frying; served as a salad; and milled into flour to prepare porridge.

As enslaved Africans were brought to the U.S. and forced to work the land, they adapted their cultural foods to fit the limited resources they had access to. They cultivated crops on small plots of land to supplement their meager diet. Legumes such as black-eyed peas were one of those crops—and they quickly became a staple in their diet.

Rich in protein and fiber, legumes helped to keep enslaved African Americans and their families healthy. They were also cheap and readily available, making it possible for them to be used in a wide variety of dishes. As African Americans have faced systemic oppression and limited access to resources throughout U.S. history, the cuisine that has emerged from this community reflects the struggle for survival and celebration of our history and culture.

My grandmother and mother, who hailed from the Black Belt of Central Alabama and moved north during the Great Migration in the late 1940s, both grew black-eyed peas in small garden plots, along with tomatoes and collard greens. Cooked up as Hoppin' John or in a cold salad, black-eyed peas were always a staple at family gatherings.

Legumes are still an important part of the long and enduring African American culinary tradition. Chefs (like me!) celebrate the history and relationship of legumes throughout the diaspora by reimagining how we cook with black-eyed peas. My grandmother was a traditionalist; she would grow them in her backyard yearly and dry them for storage. Then she would soak the dried beans overnight and slow-cook them to serve with Sunday dinner after church.

When I started to show a twinkle of interest in cooking in my early youth, my mother would tell me to always smell and taste my food throughout the process and to look for new and creative ways to use black-eyed peas. She continues to be a source of inspiration to me as I look for fresh, healthy ways to incorporate them into my dishes, like this salad. The briny preserved lemon balances the spicy peri-peri sauce and harissa for a different flavor twist on a dish featuring black-eyed peas and collard greens.

The use of legumes in African American cuisine is a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of a people who have been through some of the darkest times in American history. Black-eyed peas not only kept them nourished but also provided a source of comfort and a reminder of our proud history. Celebrating the role of black-eyed peas in African American cuisine is not just a celebration of tasty food but a celebration of the ingenuity of a community that turned limited resources into rich culinary traditions.

Spicy Black-Eyed Pea & Collard Greens Salad

ACTIVE TIME: 45 min
TOTAL TIME: 45 min

- 1 tablespoon neutral oil, such as grapeseed or canola
- 1 small shallot, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
- ½ cup finely chopped yellow and/or red bell pepper
- 1 cup thinly sliced collard greens, coarsely chopped
- ½ teaspoon harissa paste
- ¼–½ teaspoon peri-peri sauce
- 2 cups cooked black-eyed peas or 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added black-eyed peas, rinsed
- ½ teaspoon turbinado sugar
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground pepper
- ¼ cup roughly chopped stemmed flat-leaf parsley
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped preserved lemon
- 1 medium tomato, chopped

1. Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add shallot and garlic; cook, stirring, until fragrant and slightly golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Add bell pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until starting to soften, 1 to 3 minutes. Add collard greens; cook, stirring, until slightly wilted, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in harissa and peri-peri sauce, then mix in black-eyed peas. Season with sugar, salt and pepper. Reduce heat to low; cook, stirring occasionally, 3 to 5 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning, if desired.
2. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl. Add parsley, olive oil, lemon juice and preserved lemon; mix well. Fold in tomato and adjust seasoning, if desired.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** ½ CUP
CALORIES 191 **CARBOHYDRATES** 17G
DIETARY FIBER 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G
PROTEIN 5G **TOTAL FAT** 12G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **SODIUM** 143MG

Naengmyeon are Korean-style buckwheat noodles. Look for them at Asian markets or online. They sometimes come with a seasoning packet, which you can discard or save for another use.

New Noodles

BY CHRISTINE RO

Comfort foods are often steaming hot. Soups and casseroles come to mind. But my comfort food of choice is bibim naengmyeon, a cold dish of sweet, spicy, vinegary Korean noodles.

This is appropriate for people like me, who have needed to take refuge from the heat more than from the cold. On sweltering summer days in Southern California, where my mother immigrated and where I grew up, bibim naengmyeon provided a refreshing taste of Korea. The San Fernando Valley isn't as humid as Seoul, but it has some of the highest temperatures in Los Angeles, given its distance from the cooling power of the ocean or the mountains.

My mom and I turned to summer treats like mung bean popsicles, chilled soups and yogurt drinks—foods to quench the thirst while satisfying the soul. For me, bibim naengmyeon was the star. I associate it with the food courts attached to Korean supermarkets but also with kitchen tables.

It's an unfussy dish. Vigorously mixing together the ingredients just before eating makes for a delightfully messy dish. (*Bibim* means mixed, as in bibimbap, or mixed rice.) And it's hard to remain elegant while slurping from a heaping bowl of noodles, which leave behind an oily red smear around the lips and a pungent smell in the air.

As a vegan, I now forgo sliced egg and beef on top. But fried tofu slices are an excellent modification. And while I usually cut up cucumbers, carrots or zucchini to swirl into the noodles, many other vegetables would work just fine. I have to admit that I've never bothered adding pear or radish slices when making it.

Purists might be horrified, but for me, the beauty of this dish lies in its simplicity and versatility. Appropriately, then, my version is a kind of hybrid of two similar tossed-noodle dishes: bibim naengmyeon, with its buckwheat-mix noodles, and bibim guksu, with its simple sauce.

This borrowing reflects the hybrid nature of my own upbringing and family, which is now a mixture of Mexican, Apache, Filipino and North and South Korean. Like this heaping pile of noodles, my family is bibim indeed. And it's a comfort no matter the weather.

Bibim Naengmyeon

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 30 min

- 1 pound naengmyeon noodles or soba noodles
- 3 tablespoons gochujang
- 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 3 tablespoons agave syrup, maple syrup, honey or brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons sesame oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 English cucumber, cut into matchsticks
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
- Fried tofu slices (optional)
- Pickled radish slices (optional)
- Chopped green onions (optional)

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add noodles and cook until softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, mix gochujang, vinegar, agave (or other sweetener), soy sauce, sesame oil and garlic in a small bowl.
3. Drain the noodles and rinse with cold water to cool; drain completely. (You can add ice cubes to the colander for colder noodles.) You can cut the noodles into smaller pieces if you want to make them easier to eat.
4. Divide the noodles among 6 bowls. Spoon about 3 tablespoons of the sauce on top of each bowl of noodles, then stack about ½ cup of cucumber slices on top of each. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Mix well just before eating.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 1⅓ CUPS · **CALORIES** 386 **CARBOHYDRATES** 69G **DIETARY FIBER** 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 11G **ADDED SUGARS** 10G **PROTEIN** 11G **TOTAL FAT** 8G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **SODIUM** 595MG

NOPALES COME AS FRESH WHOLE PADDLES, CHOPPED FRESH AND CHOPPED JARRED OR CANNED.

A Family Favorite

BY MARIA LAURA HADDAD-GARCIA

When I was growing up in Chihuahua, Mexico, my mom needed to make sure that her six kids were well fed and nourished. And while I wouldn't consider any of us picky eaters when we were young, there was always something in every meal that one of us didn't like. For me, that was cooked carrots, green peas and beets.

Vegetable soup has always been part of the weekly meal rotation at my parents' house, and carrots are always featured in that soup. As a kid, to avoid confrontations with my parents, I'd leave all of the carrot pieces and basically swallow them at the end of the meal with a glass of water. (I'm over that now!) Green peas also made their way into my body barely intact. As for beets, my mom told me that ancient civilizations used colorful produce as cosmetics, and beets, specifically, were used as lipstick. Even now, I don't know if that's true, but it did the trick! Before eating my beets, I'd paint my lips with a piece and then eat them drizzled with ranch dressing.

If there was one dish we could all agree on, it was our mom's ensalada de nopales (cactus salad)—even my younger brother and sister, who claimed not to like tomatoes. And if she served it on tostadas with avocado and fresh cheese, even better. You can think of it as a pico-de-gallo-style salad plus nopales (minus the serrano, but if you're a serrano lover, it's a great addition!). Nopales, also known as prickly pear, are the paddles of the nopal or prickly pear cactus. They have a bright green color, a slightly viscous texture and a tart, slightly bitter flavor. They are rich in antioxidants and fiber and are widely used in Mexico to relieve constipation.

My mom's tostadas are such a staple at my parents' house that she not only serves them pretty regularly, but they're also a must when she hosts a gathering. They make frequent appearances as an appetizer or served alongside carne asada or pan-seared fish. And the best part is that they're loved by the whole family (my niece and nephews adore them), and they're as easy to make as it gets. Finding fresh cactus paddles in the U.S. might be the trickiest part—but lucky for you, using canned or jarred ones solves the problem.

Assembling the tostadas is very straightforward. Basically, you just spread some mashed avocado evenly on the tostada, add the nopales salad and top it with cubed queso panela (a Mexican fresh cheese). Personally, I like using crumbled queso fresco or feta cheese instead. And for an extra Mexican touch, add your favorite salsa on top. Besides being really delicious, these tostadas are packed with gut-supporting and satisfying fiber—one serving provides 6 grams of fiber.

In just 30 minutes, you'll have a flavorful, nutritious, fresh salad ready to use in any meal of the day. I always make a big batch, because it goes great with lots of things. It pairs well with scrambled eggs at breakfast or mixed in with greens and grilled chicken for lunch or dinner. And if you want a fresh and savory snack, a bowl of nopales salad with some crumbled cheese is the perfect option.

Tostadas con Nopales y Queso Panela

ACTIVE TIME: 30 min
TOTAL TIME: 30 min

- 2 cups chopped cooked fresh nopales or rinsed jarred or canned nopales (see Notes)
- ¾ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 medium plum tomato, chopped
- ½ cup chopped white onion
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2–3 tablespoons lime juice
- ⅛–¼ teaspoon salt plus ¼ teaspoon, divided
- Ground pepper to taste
- 9 tostada shells, preferably baked (see Notes)
- 2 ripe avocados
- 3 tablespoons cubed queso panela or crumbled queso fresco

1. Combine nopales, cilantro, tomato, onion, oil, lime juice to taste, ¼ teaspoon salt (⅛ teaspoon if using jarred or canned nopales) and pepper to taste in a medium bowl. Scoop avocado flesh into a small bowl; mash with the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt.
2. Spread about 2 tablespoons mashed avocado on each tostada, then top with ⅓ cup nopales salad and sprinkle with about 1 teaspoon cheese. Serve immediately.

NOTES

If you're using fresh nopales paddles, scrape off any thorns and trim any tough edges. If they're not already chopped, cut them into ½-inch pieces. Cook in boiling water until tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Drain and pat dry. If you're using jarred or canned, just rinse and pat dry. You'll need about 14 ounces if using paddles, or 12 ounces if using pre-chopped, canned or jarred, to make 2 cups.

Baked tostadas are becoming more popular in Mexico than fried (look for "horneadas" on the label). You can either toast them on a comal or cast-iron skillet or bake them at 400°F until crisp, 8 to 10 minutes.

SERVINGS 9 **SERVING SIZE** 1 TOSTADA
CALORIES 213 **CARBOHYDRATES** 17G
DIETARY FIBER 6G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 3G **TOTAL FAT** 16G
SATURATED FAT 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 2MG
SODIUM 201MG

Meatless Makeover

BY PAT TANUMIHARDJA

I haven't eaten my mother's rendang since I gave up eating red meat two decades ago. This deeply flavorful Indonesian dish involves slow-cooking beef in coconut milk with herbs and spices (think turmeric, lemongrass, galangal and chiles) until caramelized. It's no wonder that it was once voted the world's best food by CNN readers.

Traditionally, rendang is served at a *selamatan,* a communal meal that celebrates a happy occasion like a baby's birth or a wedding. It is also a requisite dish during Lebaran, which is what Indonesians call Eid al-Fitr.

Similarly, my Indonesian-Chinese mum, Julia, made rendang for special occasions. My two siblings and I grew up in Singapore, and, though we lived abroad, my mum made it a point to keep us connected to our culture. We spoke our mother tongue at home, we abided by our cultural traditions, and most important of all, we ate home-cooked Indonesian food daily.

During a trip to Indonesia, I sampled a variety of rendang dishes and discovered that my mum's is quite different from everyone else's. She doesn't add the krisik (shredded fresh coconut that's toasted and pounded into

a "butter") used as a thickener in many renditions, because she doesn't like it. She stops cooking it when it's still saucy. Plus, her beef and potato combo is definitely not the norm!

But the highlight of that trip was reconnecting with rendang in vegan form.

In Central Java, I met with acclaimed chef Dewi Novita Sari. Dewi and her husband, Dadang Herry Murpiyanto, own Little Garden, a delightful plant-based restaurant set among rice fields in Yogyakarta. Dewi welcomed me into her home kitchen and taught me how to make rendang with oyster mushrooms (rendang jamur). A meatless rendang is not unusual, said Dewi, who learned to cook from her grandmother. In fact, plant-based dishes were very much a part of her childhood diet growing up in a small village on the outskirts of Yogya.

More research revealed that even though buffalo meat was the original choice for rendang, other variants include poultry, ferns, jackfruit, eel, cassava and, the most common today, beef.

Except for the main ingredient, Dewi's recipe is similar to what I ate growing up in many ways. When I came home, I used her recipe as a base and incorporated elements from my mum's to create a mushroom rendang recipe all my own.

I used to feel a twinge of guilt for not following my mum's recipes to a T. I've since realized that there's nothing wrong with taking a traditional recipe off tangent. That's what my mum did. So why can't I?

Rendang Jamur (Mushroom Rendang)

ACTIVE TIME: 35 min
TOTAL TIME: 1 hr 35 min

- **2 medium shallots, coarsely chopped**
- **3 cloves garlic, smashed**
- **¼ cup chili paste, such as sambal oelek, or to taste**
- **¾ teaspoon salt, divided**
- **2 tablespoons canola oil or other neutral oil, such as coconut or avocado**
- **½ teaspoon ground cardamom**
- **¼ teaspoon Sichuan peppercorns or black peppercorns, coarsely ground**
- **1 (2 inch) cinnamon stick**
- **3 star anise**
- **1 pound oyster mushrooms, shredded into strips with your fingers**
- **1 (13 ounce) can coconut milk mixed with ½ cup water**
- **¼ cup tamarind water or 2 tablespoons lime juice**
- **2 lemongrass stalks, trimmed**
- **4 makrut lime leaves (optional)**
- **2 (½ inch) slices galangal or fresh ginger**
- **2 tablespoons coconut palm sugar or dark brown sugar**
- **2 cups hot cooked jasmine rice**

1. Pulse shallots, garlic, chili paste and ¼ teaspoon salt in a small food processor or blender until it's the texture of oatmeal, about 1 minute, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. (Alternatively, use a mortar and pestle.)
2. Heat oil in a large flat-bottom wok or skillet over medium-low heat until shimmering. Add the shallot mixture, cardamom, peppercorns, cinnamon stick and star anise; cook, stirring frequently, until the mixture is very fragrant and has turned a few shades darker, 5 to 7 minutes. (Reduce the heat if the paste is browning too fast. You don't want the paste to burn.) Once the moisture has evaporated, the ingredients will separate from the oil. The paste is now ready for the next step.
3. Add mushrooms and stir to coat with the spice paste. Add coconut milk-water mixture, tamarind water (or lime juice), lemongrass, lime leaves (if using), galangal (or ginger), sugar and the remaining ½ teaspoon salt; stir to combine. Bring to a gentle boil over medium heat, stirring constantly so the coconut milk doesn't split. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, stirring every 15 to 20 minutes, until most of the liquid has evaporated, forming a thick gravy, and oil pools on the surface of the rendang, 1 to 1 ½ hours. Toward the end of cooking, stir more frequently so the mixture doesn't stick.
4. Taste and adjust seasonings if necessary. Fish out and discard the whole herbs and spices, or leave them in for a rustic presentation. Serve over rice.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ½ CUP EACH RENDANG AND RICE **CALORIES** 480 **CARBOHYDRATES** 56G **DIETARY FIBER** 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 12G **ADDED SUGARS** 8G **PROTEIN** 9G **TOTAL FAT** 28G **SATURATED FAT** 19G **SODIUM** 798MG

A Grandmother's Gift

BY NADIA HASSANI

There are few German dishes that I haven't cooked since I set out to explore the cuisine of my native country almost 20 years ago. One recipe I keep going back to, and the main course I prepare the most often, is potato pancakes. For me, they are the epitome of German comfort food.

I grew up on potato pancakes prepared by my grandmother, who often made them for me when I went to her house after school. My mother worked full-time and wasn't home when school ended at midday. As there were no school lunches in those days in Germany, my grandmother living halfway between the school and our apartment was an ideal arrangement.

During the first three years after I immigrated to the United States, I lived in New York City, and German food was the last thing on my mind. But that changed when I met my husband, who was a widower with two young children. For love, I moved from the bustling city with its multitude of ethnicities and restaurants to a tiny hamlet surrounded by a monoculture of Pennsylvania Dutch farmers.

I struggled to find my place in the void the death of the children's mother had left. As I became an adoptive mother and settled into the vast and unknown terrain of parenting, the kitchen became my stronghold, the place where I felt the most comfortable and where I knew my way around. I started cooking some of my grandmother's recipes. It did more than put dinner on the table for my new family; it was also a way for me to assert my cultural identity and heritage and introduce them to it.

Happily, my potato pancakes were a way we connected. My husband is Jewish, and for him and the children, latkes, which are very similar, were familiar food that even our son, who was a picky eater, would always gobble up happily. At first, I only made potato pancakes for Hanukkah. But when I realized they were a hit, I started making them year-round.

I don't recall my grandmother ever sitting down to eat with me, and for potato pancakes, it somewhat made sense, because the dedicated cook is usually stuck at the stove, frying. I deviated from that, because it is important to me that we eat together. I pop the finished pancakes into a preheated oven, which allows me to serve the entire batch hot. I know that my grandmother would not like this waste of energy, and I am sure that the idea of using the food processor instead of grating the potatoes by hand would also not have met with her approval. But then again, she might like the idea that I am using the potato skins.

Maybe it will be my version of Grandma Lydia's recipe for German potato pancakes that my children will hold onto.

German Potato Pancakes

ACTIVE TIME: 35 min
TOTAL TIME: 55 min

- **2 pounds russet potatoes**
- **1 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped**
- **2 large eggs, lightly beaten**
- **¾ teaspoon salt**
- **¼ teaspoon ground pepper**
- **4 tablespoons canola oil or other neutral oil, divided**
- **Applesauce for serving**

1. Scrub potatoes well and remove any eyes and blemishes. Cut the potatoes into wedges that will fit through the food chute of a food processor. Attach the shredding disk to the food processor. Pass the potato wedges through the food chute to shred. You should have about 5 loosely packed cups. Remove the shredding disk and insert the blade. Pulse the potatoes until very finely chopped but not quite a smooth puree, 4 to 5 times.
2. Line a fine-mesh strainer with a clean dish towel and place over a large bowl. Scrape the potatoes into the colander and set aside to drain.
3. Pulse onion in the food processor until finely chopped.
4. Press down on the potatoes a couple of times to exude remaining liquid, then pick up the corners of the towel and twist to squeeze out as much liquid as possible over the colander and into the bowl. Let the potato liquid stand for a few minutes until the white potato starch settles at the bottom. Carefully pour off the liquid, retaining the starch. Add the potatoes to the starch, using a silicone spatula to scrape them off the towel. Add the onion, eggs, salt and pepper. Stir well to combine.
5. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a large baking sheet with cooking spray.
6. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot enough to sizzle a shred of grated potato. Mound 4 pancakes in the hot oil, using a heaping ¼ cup potato mixture each. Gently flatten the mounds to make 3-inch pancakes. Cook, flipping once halfway, until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes per side. (Reduce heat, if necessary, to prevent burning.) Transfer to the prepared baking sheet.
7. Repeat to make two more batches of pancakes, using an additional 1 tablespoon oil to make each batch.
8. Bake the potato pancakes until sizzling, about 10 minutes. Serve with applesauce.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 3 PANCAKES
CALORIES 350 **CARBOHYDRATES** 44G
DIETARY FIBER 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G
PROTEIN 8G **TOTAL FAT** 17G
SATURATED FAT 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 93MG
SODIUM 484MG

Grounds for a Good Marriage

The author and her wife share a morning ritual of coffee for two. Here's why it's about more than the caffeine.

BY GABRIELLE HAMILTON

I WAS ONCE GIVEN WISE and well-meaning advice on the secret of a lasting marriage: Never go to bed angry. And it's advice I want to take seriously. But I really think there has to be an accommodation for those of us who work restaurant hours.

We're two chefs, my wife and I. We run a restaurant. Restaurant work is done at night, as you well know—all night, as you might not know—and we get home deep in the silent middle of it. Even that is a euphemism: Chefs do not get home in the middle of the night of the day they went in on; chefs get home from work not even on the same day they went in.

So nighttime reparations are a pretty tall order for us. Even though it is nauseating how in love we are, cloyingly sweet how well suited for each other we are, don't think for a second that our marriage doesn't come with the occasional whoppers. Have you ever heard two left-wing feminist lesbians quarreling over the equal distribution of "women's work"?

What we have never once done, however, is miss our morning coffee. Every single morning of every single day of this marriage, when one or the other of us wakes, there is coffee. And there are two cups. The day there is no cup left for the wife—either one—is the day it's over.

Even on days when there's a rift, or on days when there's a sick dog or one of the kids needs to be dropped at school or a prep cook has called out with a personal emergency and we can't stay to attend to our rift, there is still, incredibly, coffee left prepared for the other.

There was the one made in a rush by pouring out the dregs of yesterday's black-ringed pot into a fresh ceramic cup and leaving it on the counter with a Post-it scribbled in black Sharpie: "Not my best work. I love you."

There was the one poured into a takeout cup and left in front of the microwave to zap when you were ready.

And the one that was not waiting there on the counter as usual, the one that made your heart drop into your stomach. The one that was The End, or so you thought. Dragging yourself to work slope-shouldered, picking your cuticles to bloody bits along the way, the "elevens" between your eyes in deep crease, you stop into your local coffee shop and order your lonely coffee—and the guy behind the counter has it ready, hands it over and says: "Ashley was already here. She paid and she left this one for you."

The No. 1 greatest cup of coffee of all time.

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(clockwise from top) Morgan Hunt Glaze; Jamie Vespa; Blaine Moats

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The Power of Tea

Four teas fall under the true tea category: green, black, oolong and white. All are derived from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. Varieties of tea, like black and green, are rich in polyphenols. And certain polyphenols found in some true teas, like EGCG and theaflavin, may support immune health, according to a 2020 review in *Frontiers in Immunology.* Among the factors that can play a role in cancer risk, drinking tea may be one that has a protective effect. Data published in *Advances in Nutrition* in 2020 suggests that tea consumption may have protective effects against some types of cancer, particularly oral cancer. Tea's polyphenols, which have antioxidant properties, may soak up the free radicals that contribute to cancer development, and they also may suppress the growth of cancer cells. Getting in the habit of drinking tea every day is a simple, low-effort and pleasurable way to support your continued health. *—Lauren Manaker M.S., RDN, LD, CLEC*

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